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PLAYBOY

BDSM

finding enlightenment in the dark ...

BY **IAN KIRKE**

According to Ian Dury in his 1977 hit, co-written with Chaz Jankel, ‘Sex and drugs and rock and roll is all my brain and body need. Sex and drugs and rock and roll are very good indeed’. If I were being picky, I would add good food, some cash in my skyrocket and a nice place to live too, but I acknowledge with such attention to detail I would be a crap songwriter. In terms of the sex element, I lost my virginity at nineteen, a relatively slow starter by contemporary standards, and as I recall the earth didn’t move for either of us. I made up for the slow start and think I am fairly good at it, although to be honest I have never met another male who had a contrary view. Between you and I, not to be echoed to anyone else, I think my prowess is best summed up by Woody Allen’s sage words: “I’m such a good lover because I practise a lot on my own.”

I am inherently lazy and crave comfort in most personal endeavours. Although I have done some risky things in my life my level of kink has nonetheless remained consistent: just above switching the light on. I also don’t do pain. Getting into the pool in Tenerife for the first time is usually accompanied by a few howls of anguish. If anyone were tempted to twist my nipples, they would probably follow this up with searching for their teeth on the bedroom carpet. Other than food, drink, and certain medical procedures my orifices aren’t for entering, and if any foreign object looms in the vicinity of my posterior my fight or flight response is highly attuned for defensive action. Overall, I would rank my sexual appetite as vanilla with a little sauce of which the latter is totally within my own defined pouring parameters. With this testosterone charged testimonial it was inevitable that my journalistic skills would eventually be challenged by the goading of others who smirk at the sexual exploits of a close pal of Pee-wee Herman and Noddy. So, with my stout boots on, sensible under garments and vest, ensuring that I never left any vents unguarded I turned my investigative skills to the great sexual unknown: BDSM.

Of course I had heard of BDSM, mainly through inane banter with other male friends and had built up a mental image of gas masks, spanking, chains and being led around the lounge on a dog collar. How reliable this perception was would ultimately be put to the test. I must admit to being a tad confused too, especially since my mum’s neighbour Dorothy had expressed heartfelt appreciation of the novel Fifty Shades of Grey by E.L. James, an accomplished author who in my humble opinion looked more like a librarian than a dominatrix. Dot was also in her seventies and liked knitting and jigsaw puzzles. Wrapped around this disorientation was evidence, if one can say that of mainstream media, that BDSM had seen a resurgence during the COVID-19 pandemic. I must admit to having altered my domestic habits somewhat during the successive lockdowns,
although I doubted if binge watching Netflix in my dressing gown and not showering until late afternoon qualified as kink.

With the help of a bunch of charming, trusting, and bubbly BDSM’ers drawn from the connections that form the social media highway of human cyber relations I drew up my list of research questions and listened. Without their collaboration, openness, and sincerity this piece would have lacked any veracity or humanity. Creating some form of instruction manual was never my intention, as quite frankly, I lacked any professional or anecdotal experience.

What is BDSM?

A good place to start since I didn’t know, without a Google search, what the acronym stood for. Indeed, I wasn’t the only one as it had a variety of definitions.
B - Bondage, D - Discipline/Domination, S - Submission/Sadism (feeling pleasure/sexual excitement by inflicting pain), M - Masochism (feeling pleasure/sexual excitement receiving pain).

Although Mistress Kiba qualified the textbook status by adding, “It generally boils down to a mutually agreed upon power exchange. This can look vastly different in each dynamic and there is not a single 'correct' way of being involved in BDSM. Some people keep BDSM to sex, some live 'the lifestyle' 24/7.”

Thinking that I had grasped the parameters I was thrown into confusion when Tracy entered the room and proudly exclaimed, “It really does cover everything from balloon fetishes to ultraviolence.” Sam added somewhat rationally, “It's an umbrella term for those practicing kink.” Kitchenalia could be kinky too! As I ate my porridge the next morning, spoon in hand my mind wandered …

Does it hurt?

Sam commenced with a reassuring salvo. “Not all acts will involve physical pain.

For instance, I get off on humiliation and the psychological.” Now I could do that, having years of experience barracking my own players at Notts County! But then again, I don’t think this qualified as BDSM as Miriam upped the tempo, “It can hurt, but there’s consent and boundaries within each interaction and relationship. Pain play can come into it if that’s your thing, but there’s so much more than discomfort involved with BDSM. It definitely shouldn’t hurt emotionally.”

Mistress Kiba broadened the enquiry with a degree of welcome theory. “A dominant/submissive dynamic can have no pain element to it at all. As a dominatrix, I have many clients that I purely dominate online. They may have tasks to complete, rules to abide by, acts of servitude that they get enjoyment out of without even having to be in the same place. It is a myth that all dominants are sadists and all submissives are masochists. If you want it to hurt it can hurt a lot, if you don't want it to it doesn't have to.”

I was beginning to realise that BDSM was not a narrow pursuit. This continuum was elegantly summed up by Debbie who said, “Saying I’m into BDSM is like saying I like food. There are so many branches of the community and probably something even the most vanilla person would be curious about.”

What was your BDSM journey?

Sam was relatively new to the scene and up until recently had been standing with me in the ‘nothing to declare’ aisle. “My BDSM journey is a relatively new one. My vanilla relationship had broken down and I had always felt there was something missing. I got to meet a dom in December 2019, after several weeks of online chatting. He planned and discussed every detail from start to finish, what to wear, what to expect, how I would be expected to address him and so on.”

Although more experienced, Debbie’s gateway to kink had similarities despite her progression being from higher ground. “At 25 I started organising my own private orgies. I was fortunate to find a man who had several trusted friends. I met a businessman in a hotel who ended up using his fist, but not to bang on the table if you know what I mean! This had rather pleasurable results. I liked being controlled.”

Miriam added to the narrative and initially I wondered if she knew Dorothy. “I was acutely aware of its existence thanks to that awful set of novels called Fifty Shades of Grey. I read half of the first book and never picked it back up again. As a newly single 19-year-old, I wanted to stretch my legs - I mean wings! - and signed up for an online dating profile. I came across an older man and we matched, started messaging and eventually swapped numbers and hooked up.

We swapped porn videos and explicit messages. Then he took me to a market called the BBB (Birmingham Bizarre Bazaar) where he introduced me to the social side of BDSM.”

Mistress Kiba chimed a more cautious tone as she reflected on her voyage of discovery. “I was 18 and was introduced in an unsafe way by people who were taking advantage of my naivety. It seemed fine at the time but now I look back and cringe which is why it's important to wait to get involved when you're a little older and you have people you can trust to guide you.”

Tracy added, “I came across it via the internet, realised I was into some of it, and went to one of the big fetish markets to investigate further. I started attending events about eight years ago, and that’s really when my social circle grew, and my understanding of different fetishes and the etiquette and expectations of the scene developed. For people looking at getting involved, I’d suggest starting with online social sites to understand more about your kinks. Munches are a good starting point, post COVID restrictions, which are social, non-play events held in vanilla venues, such as pubs or coffee shops.”

This all seemed very cordial and, dare I say, British although I couldn’t help wondering if falling down the rabbit hole into Wonderland could have some disadvantages, especially in terms of monogamous relationships? Miriam picked up my vibes and sought to manage the opening of Pandora’s box in a more practical manner. “For me, BDSM and romantic relationships go hand in hand. I would struggle to have a monogamous romantic relationship without any BDSM based activity. I naturally lean towards polyamory because I feel as humans, we have a complex set of needs in romance, sexual and platonic ways so confining that to just one person feels inherently unfair. I like

Wensleydale cheese as much as I like Cheddar, right? Similar concept with sex and BDSM."

Is it for everyone?
Everyone in the house agreed. BDSM isn't for everyone. None of them metaphorically pushed it down my throat either. Miriam qualified the sentiment by adding, "There's probably something that falls under the umbrella of BDSM that a lot of people will like. Anal sex used to be considered particularly out there and kinky, but it's quite normalised now."

Mistress Kiba reinforced the variety of kink to choose from when she reminded us all of the joy of dressing up. "Getting dressed up as a schoolgirl/boy and having your 'teacher' tell you off is a form of submission." At this point I had a flashback to Mr Piper, my stern mathematics teacher at secondary school. Tracy broke this unhealthy chain of thought when she turned the focus onto fantasy pursuits. "It's not just about wearing latex and leather and being whipped in a dingy club. It could be role play during sex; it could be your long-distance partner telling you exactly what to do when you masturbate on video chat. I think there's a lot of misunderstanding about what BDSM is which is why people think that it isn't for them."

Debbie couldn't hide her craving for the kink. "Impact play is a huge part for me. I love being spanked and caned. I also adore the degradation and humiliation side although only for Sir at his request." Bugger! I was back in front of Mr Piper and couldn't remember what a half times a half actually equated to. Time to move on!

What are the myths and legends?
Debbie was quick to pop the balloon (which I now know I can use for more than just celebrating a birthday) that most of my associates had dreamt up about BDSM. "I guess myths and legends would be images of whips, chains and dungeons. They can be introduced but this would not be a fair representation."

Miriam sighed at the numerous fables. "The one that springs to mind first is
about submissives. They're all meek, shy nerds. Absolutely not the case! I've met submissives who just look like regular people: doctors, nurses, factory workers, shop assistants, mechanics, etc. Your barista at the coffee shop might be a nighttime deviant. Another common misconception is that people into BDSM can't have normal sex, and that it has to get weird and kinky. This is absolutely not true! I've had some really fulfilling, satisfying sex as just two people getting it on."

Mistress Kiba continued to dispel the myths that I was increasingly minded to conclude were being perpetuated by those who knew absolutely nothing about the case in hand (or umbrella, you choose!). We vanillas were holding the smoking gun. "I have clients from all walks of life. Since my time is valuable, I deal with a lot of people who earn a fair amount of money. That respectable CEO business person may be grovelling at my feet after their meeting. There is no one 'type' who are into BDSM. Not everyone in the LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex plus) community are into BDSM either."

What role do you best represent?
Sam kicked off with an entry level synopsis. "Roles involved include dom, master/mistress, sub, slave, rope bunny and switch." The need for clarification on these alien terms was forthcoming when it was explained that you can switch from rigger (one who ties) to bunny (the one being tied). She added, "I mostly identify as a brat, a type of sub who enjoys punishment and will play with their dom to even encourage discipline." Debbie nodded enthusiastically in a distinctly impish manner.

Miriam laid her cards on the table, "I will take charge in a group situation to help control someone else on request of a dominant person. Generally, this is referred to as a 'service top', but my preference is to be the submissive, bottom of the food chain if you will." This sudden mention of food made me hungry although I was beginning to wonder if vanilla ice cream would be adequate.

New terminologies, that got me clicking on Google, were introduced by Mistress Kiba. "I am a cis (individuals who identify with the gender that was assigned to them at birth, not being transgender) femme dominant. I am a sadist but that is reserved for my masochistic subs and I get my kicks from medical play." Tracy continued the penchant for all things related to doctors and nurses although she also expressed a keenness for extreme spanking by virtue of an array of instruments.

What is the best part?
There was a mutual recognition of the care, compassion, and honesty that my BDSM'ers had encountered. This came as something of a surprise, as some of the roles, excluding the balloon play that even I could engage with, static aside, appeared to contradict this assertion. But that's where I almost certainly had it all wrong. Miriam captured the mood by declaring, "For me, it's feeling cared about. Knowing that you have someone who you can talk to about anything and everything and stuff you didn't even think about until it comes up. You are someone."

Any disadvantages?
Debbie, I am sure, knew Dorothy as she immediately, and thankfully, rejected anyone who had read the Fifty Shades of Grey series or seen the films. Tracy was a little more forgiving of my mums near neighbour. "I won't dismiss the 'Fifty Shades' effect as wholly detrimental because I do think it opened doors to people who might not have been brave enough to open them, but I do think it's become a lot more judgemental as people who are less experienced or less knowledgeable come onto the scene. Also, I hate to break it to you but I've yet to meet a billionaire dom with his own private jet. Maybe it's just the company I keep, but they don't seem to be in large supply."

Sam pointed out the risks of inexperience and choosing the wrong partner. "Always be clear what your hard and soft limits are. And if they say there'll be no safe word then that's an immediate red flag!" Mistress Kiba added to this caution. "Everything has it's disadvantages but that's where the community really come into play. There are plenty of people who claim they have experience who haven't which can get people hurt. The co munity are great for education and protection though. We all understand that we didn't get into BDSM knowing everything, we don't look down on anyone for knowing less about something. If you want to learn, just ask."

According to Miriam certain roles have drawbacks too. "Be

ing a submissive takes an awful lot of trust, and because of how much trust you need to give it's extremely easy to get hurt."

Mainstream media suggests that there has been a spike in BDSM during COVID. What are your thoughts?
Tracy couldn't hide her excitement. "I think it's brilliant! People are having a go, exploring, and learning." Then added the 'but' (not to be confused with bottom play), "Just make sure that you're doing it safely. Things like breath play and even restraints can have catastrophic effects if they go wrong. I know someone who nearly lost a finger because of a rope tie that was too tight for too long."

Others recognised that successive lockdowns had increased the notion of 'spicing things up' in the boudoir. Mistress Kiba, ever the pragmatist, pointed out, "There are tons of resources online including online classes in just about everything that will help guide you in healthy BDSM practice. FetLife (BDSMfocused social networking website) is a great place to go for information and to learn about classes and talk to like-minded people."

Miriam likened the apparent surge to other natural cravings. "Imagine eating the identical meal prepared in the exact same way, every single day. You'll get bored after a week, won't you? Same thing for sex and I also think that this might be separate from Covid-19, as women are discovering their sexuality and ability to be sexual and enjoy their own bodies as well as exploring their partners.

They've realised there's more to sex than just penis in vagina." As I was digesting this nugget she followed up with a contemporary quip. "Even the best suited of partners get bored of talking about their workdays and zoom quizzes." She was right. Zoom quizzes were now beginning to suck, although was this a dom or sub trait?

For all the other vanillas out there, is there anything else we need to know?
As a vanilla with honours the reassurance of a simple code of ethics provided by Sam was more than helpful. "The golden rule: safe, sane and consensual. And enjoy it, hang up the guilt and have fun." Tracy added the useful tip of agreeing a 'safe word' or better still utilising the traffic light system: Green, good to go, amber, slow down and red, stop right there!

Debbie likewise offered a reassuring hand of guidance, open palmed rather than clenched in a fist. "If you are considering it don't just jump in. Do your research. Take time to ensure that partners are fully consenting and comfortable with all situations."

The fun element was vocalised by Miriam who added with a broad smile, "Have fun! Genuinely, BDSM and kink and anything non-vanilla is meant to be fun. Even if that includes pain. Also, things won't necessarily go right the first-time round and if they don't, try again in a week. Lastly, try everything at least twice. You might have just got your technique wrong initially." I started this journey with several preconceived ideas about BDSM and readily admit that I was comprehensively wrong! I met a bunch of people who were happy with their sexuality and were able to express to others, including old vanilla me, their emotions in a manner that was truly remarkable. My own sexual roadmap had been heavily suppressed by a narrative of Monty pythonesque 'nudge, nudge, wink, wink, say no more' reflections. Vanilla is just as good as kink, but ignorance is never a substitute for knowledge. If I have signposted you to more sunnier uplands, or reassured you that where you are, for the time being, is exactly right then our time together has been worth the effort. But time for me to depart dear reader as Dorothy has her balloons out, and has been shaking her fist at me since I am late. Ooh err missus!
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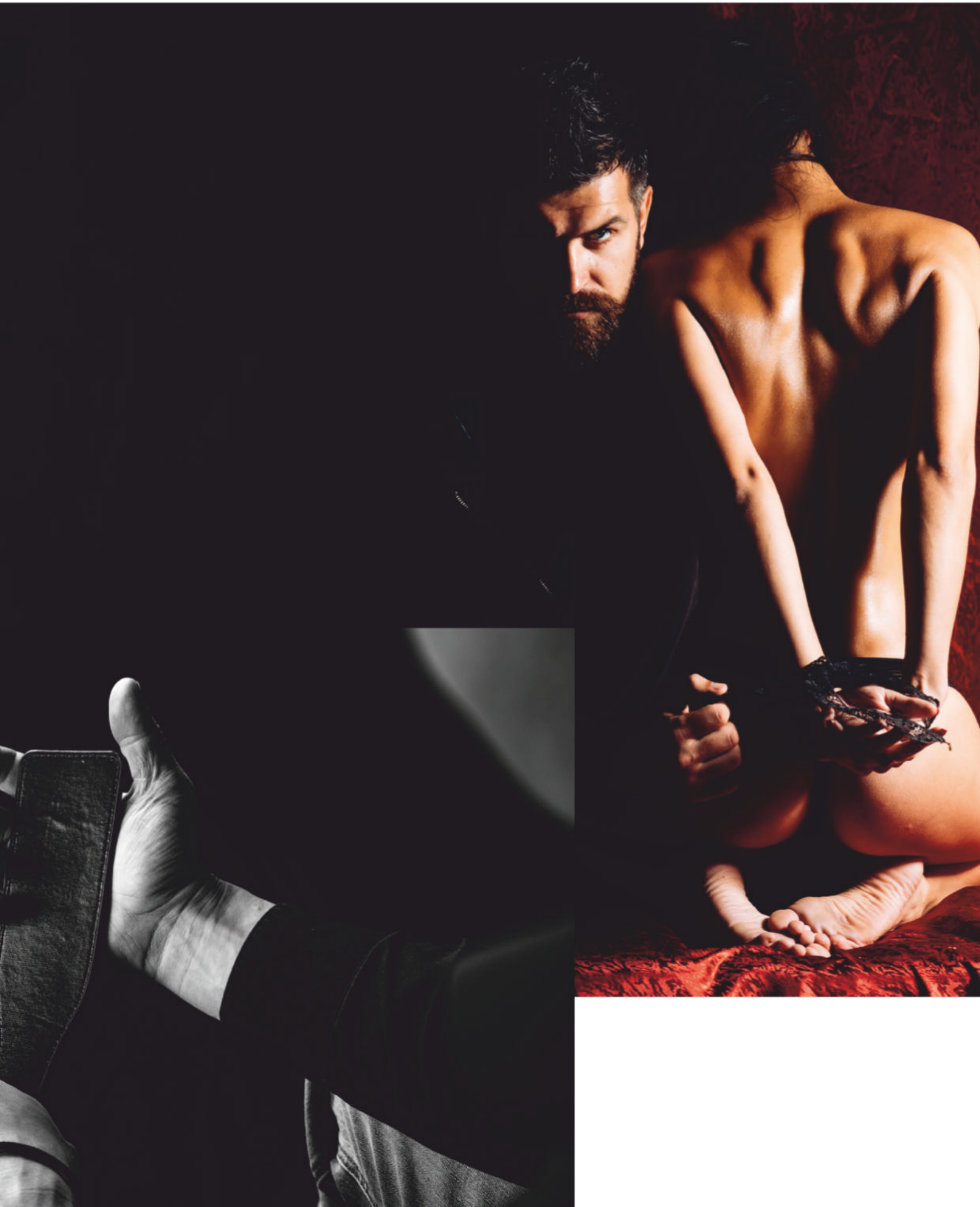


LIVE
UNAPOLOGETICALLY

Michelena Rose

Model **@itsmichelenarose**
Photographer **KA photography | @ka__photography_**

PLAYMATE

PLAYMATE

What does being chosen as a Playboy Playmate mean to you personally? To me, being a Playboy Playmate is like being handed the ultimate permission slip to be sexy, playful, and unapologetically myself. I get to be flirty, fun, and powerful all at once... and honestly, that's my favorite way to live.

Who or what inspires you when you step into such an iconic role? What inspires me? The chance to remind the world that confidence is the sexiest outfit you can wear. And honestly, knowing that somewhere out there, somebody's flipping through this magazine and choking on their coffee because they didn't see me coming... that alone could power me through any photo shoot.

Tell us about the day you did your photo shoot for Playmate of the Year, and what was going through your mind during the shoot? The all day thought was NO F*CKING WAY IS THIS REAL! Haha! My shoot felt electric. I didn't walk in hoping the camera would love me... I walked in knowing it already does, and working with KA photography brings that out of me even more! My only job was to have fun and be in the moment. Inside my head, I was thinking, 'Smile, smolder, be sexy... but also, did I pack snacks in my bag for after?

What's next for you after this major milestone with Playboy? What's next? Eeek! Anything is possible! I see this as the beginning of my international Playboy journey. First South Africa, now Australia! I'd love to bring my energy to Mexico, Europe, and anywhere else that wants a little more fire in their pages. I'm building a legacy that's bigger than one cover.

If you could describe your Playboy Playmate feature in three words, what would they be? Definitely Seductive, playful, unforgettable.

What's a powerful lesson life has taught you that you think everyone should learn? Life's taught me that you can survive almost anything.... heartbreak, setbacks, even three kids all talking at once before you've had coffee. But the real lesson is that every time you get back up, you come back stronger, sexier, and a little more unstoppable.

What motivates you to keep going, even when life gets challenging? What motivates me to keep going is simple....I love life way too much to let the hard parts dim my bright light. Even when things get challenging, I remind myself that I've already turned pain into power before, and I can do it again. Plus, I know the best chapters usually come after the hardest tests. So I keep it light, I keep it fun, and I keep moving forward... because I'd rather dance through the fire than let it burn me out.

How do you hope women feel when they see your Playmate feature? I hope women feel empowered when they see my feature... like it's proof you can be sexy and strong, playful and ambitious, all at the same time. I want them to feel seen, to realize you don't have to fit into one box to be desirable. You can be a mom, a businesswoman, a dreamer... and still be Playmate material. Sexy isn't just an image; it's an energy, and every woman has it.

What's one behind-the-scenes memory from the shoot that you'll never forget? There was this moment where the music kicked in, and I swear I wasn't even posing anymore... I was just dancing, flirting with the camera, and having the best time. I'm always cracking jokes, so being able to laugh with the crew is my fave.

What message do you hope your fans take away from your feature? I hope my fans take away that sexy isn't about fitting a mold... It's about owning your energy. Life's too short to play small, so be bold, be flirty, and have fun with who you are. When you celebrate yourself unapologetically, that's when you become magnetic... sexy is just a side effect.

What do you think sets your Playboy feature apart from others? What sets my feature apart is that it's not just about looking sexy, it's about radiating something bigger!! My energy alone is different than most people in the world... It's magnetic, it's contagious, and it lights up a room. That's what Playboy captured, and that's why it stands out.

What do you believe makes true beauty: appearance, confidence, or soul? True beauty is confidence mixed with soul. Looks might turn heads, but the way you make people feel is everything. Sexy fades, but energy and presence....that's what makes someone unforgettable.

How do you define true success, and do you feel like you're living it? To me, true success is living authentically. When you're real with yourself and the world, it creates a happiness that can't be faked...and everything else falls into place from there. Do I feel like I'm living it? Absolutely. I've built a life that's mine, on my terms, and that kind of freedom is the sexiest success of all. And honestly, if success means I get to build an empire in a bikini, then I think I nailed it.

Lastly, if you had to give your followers one piece of advice for life, what would it be? My advice is simple: live unapologetically. Don't shrink yourself to fit someone else's comfort zone. When you own who you are... flaws, fire, and all... life has no choice but to meet you at that level. And don't forget to laugh, flirt, and actually enjoy the ride, because joy is something you truly deserve.

Playboy Interview

Anita Bryant

A candid conversation about Jews, gays, sex, politics and orange juice with the crusading singer who would show homosexuals the way to salvation

INTERVIEW BY **KEN KELLEY** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **BUD LEE**

Editor's note: Our in-depth interview with singer turned anti-gay-rights crusader Anita Bryant is republished here as it originally appeared in the May 1978 issue of Playboy, warts and all. Considered by some to represent a milestone in the history of homosexuality in America, the interview helped catalyze the fight for gay rights. Journalist Ken Kelley, who was gay but not out at the time, also wrote the companion piece Cruising With Anita.

For her first 36 years, Anita Bryant was the stereotypic embodiment of the American dream; hers was a rags-to-riches saga in the best Horatio Alger tradition. For almost two decades, she'd been reasonably happy with her life: She'd evolved a system that enabled her to pursue both a lucrative career as a popular entertainer and a satisfying private life as a devoted wife and mother. She had a loyal husband, wholesome kids and a cozy home overlooking Miami's Biscayne Bay. Her life was comfortable and distinctly uncontroversial.

Last year, all that suddenly and dramatically changed; her halcyon routine perished in the flames of political warfare. When the Metropolitan Dade County Commission passed an ordinance that would, in effect, mandate that qualified homosexuals be hired as teachers in private and parochial schools, Bryant stepped forward to spearhead a drive to repeal it. The

ensuing campaign was drawn along classic good-versus-evil lines. Bryant recruited a slew of religious leaders and conservative politicos under the banner of her ad hoc organization, Save Our Children. Her pitch was simple: Homosexuality is a sin, and if homosexuals were given carte blanche to glamorize their "deviate lifestyle" in Miami-area classrooms, the American family would be destroyed and the American way of life would disappear. Miami homosexual leaders, armed with a hefty war chest, issued an urgent national SOS to supporters of "human rights"—if Bryant were successful, they said, America would turn into Nazi Germany—and liberals from Midge Costanza to Rod McKuen dutifully trekked to Miami to campaign against her. The national media seized on the issue almost from the start and a local election was turned into a national spectacle. On election day last June, the ordinance was overwhelmingly defeated and Bryant was photographed dancing a jubilant jig. But the battle was far from over; Bryant had become a fixture on the American political scene.

Although she consistently maintains that she was ill prepared to champion a political cause, Bryant admits that she's always known that she was "gifted by the Lord" with a special determination. She made her singing debut at the age of two in a rural Oklahoma Baptist church. That same year—1942—her parents divorced, and, along with her baby sister, Sandra, Bryant moved in with her maternal grandparents. After a short stint in the Service, her father came home and her parents remarried. Her stage debut came in the first grade, when she landed a role in a local high school play. The audience loved her and she loved the applause. At the age of eight, she was singing on a weekly local radio show. That same year, she convinced a preacher to baptize her. (To this day, she calls that moment the most significant one in her life.) Her parents moved the family to Oklahoma City to boost her career chances. By the age of 12, she'd won a local contest and landed her own weekly television show. Shortly thereafter, her father left and her parents divorced again; her deep-seated feelings of hatred for her father were to haunt her for the next 20 years. Her mother continued to encourage her career, and at 13, Bryant cut her first record. The next year, she hopped a plane to Hollywood in the hope of landing a movie contract; she was rejected because a studio mogul decided her big voice didn't fit her tiny body.

Her mother married again and moved the family to Tulsa in 1955 and Bryant enrolled in Will Rogers High School. She sang in the church and school choirs, starred in a local presentation of South Pacific and became a regular on a local TV variety show. She caught the eye of one of Arthur Godfrey's talent scouts, and at 16, she became a favorite on Godfrey's CBS-TV show. That was her big break—her career zoomed ahead with almost breakneck speed. After signing a contract with Carlton Records, she cut her first 1,000,000-seller record, her version of "Till There Was You." She did a series of national tours on bills with pop stars such as Rick Nelson. At the urging of her Oklahoma pals, she entered the Miss Tulsa contest, won and found herself elected both Miss Oklahoma and second runner-up in the 1959 Miss America Pageant. Radio m.c. Don McNeill offered her a slot on his ABC Breakfast Club show, so she moved to Chicago and enrolled as a speech major at Northwestern University. College life did not agree with her and she was very lonely. She met Bob Green, then Miami's top disc jockey, at a record convention and, after his assiduous courtship, she finally agreed to marry him in 1960. The couple moved to Miami Beach and in 1963, after she was told by a gynecologist that she was barren, the Greens adopted a son, Bob, Jr. She disproved her doctor's diagnosis the next year, when her daughter Gloria was born. Five years later, she gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl.

The union of Green and Bryant proved to be financially fertile as well. He became her personal manager and she soon became a much-sought performer at state fairs and conventions. She also became a favorite at advertising agencies—representing Coca-Cola, Holiday Inn, Kraft and, since 1968, the Florida Citrus Commission, as its p“sunshine girl.” She traveled for six years on Bob Hope’s U.S.O. tours. Lyndon Johnson let it be known that she was his favorite singer. Baptist preachers invited her to deliver Sunday sermons—a rare enough occurrence in that fundamentalist religion. She wrote nine books (including a cookbook) that emphasized the theme of coping with life through faith in Jesus, and they all became 1,000,000 sellers in religious bookstores.

While things seemed rosy on the surface, Bryant had transferred the negative feelings about her father that she admits in this interview to all men—including her husband—and they were threatening her marriage. And when her grandfather and two friends died within months of one another in 1974, she suffered something of a nervous collapse and sought succor in a Christian-therapy group in California. Her stay was a brief one, and out of the experience came another successful book, forgiveness of her father and a new-found devotion to her husband.

It was her husband, in fact, along with her Baptist pastor, who convinced, her to defend motherhood and Christian ideals by taking the stand against the homosexual community last year. She was shocked when most of her bookings evaporated—most booking agents were scared off by the threats of homosexuals to protest her appearances—and she appeared mostly in religious shows, always accompanied by a phalanx of angry gay pickets. She was universally reviled in the national media and by Hollywood and became cannon fodder for comedians everywhere. By her estimate, she lost half a million dollars in bookings. A national "gaycott" of Florida orange juice almost cost her her $100,000-a-year contract with the Florida Citrus Commission, though after a year's waffling, the commission renewed it. She did lose a contract with the Singer company to host her own television show, as well as her perennial job as narrator of the Orange Bowl parade. She also lost her own booking agent, Dick Shack, whose wife, Ruth, ironically enough, Bryant had helped elect to the Dade County Commission—almost immediately after which she sponsored the homosexual rights ordinance that sparked the whole showdown. Bryant insists that she took her stand based on her religious convictions, dollars be damned, and that she'd do it all over again in a minute.

Some replay of her 1977 battle looms on the horizon: After protests from the Save the Children Federation, Bryant changed the name of her organization to Protect America's Children, and that group sends out a newsletter and an organizing kit to a large list of supporters. She has determined that she will lend her efforts to support other struggles to save America from perdition, though she will not do so until she "gets a calling from the Lord" on where to go and what to do. One thing is certain: Bryant will continue to make news for a long time.

Playboy sent free-lancer Ken Kelley (whose previous PLAYBOY credit was the celebrated underground interview with fugitive Abbie Hoffman in May 1976) on an eight-day Bible Belt tour with Bryant and Green. At first, she "prayed to God for guidance" and decided against doing the interview for PLAYBOY, feeling that the nudity that appears in the magazine violated her moral standards. (She regards fornication between unmarried heterosexuals as no less a violation of the Lord's commandments than homosexual conduct.) Kelley continued the interview under assignment to Rolling Stone, but editorial differences developed and, at the end, he was able to persuade Green and Bryant that her startling views could be aired in PLAYBOY, as originally planned.

PLAYBOY: Have you always been obsessed with homosexuality?
BRYANT: Not at all. If I had been, would I have waited until 1977 to speak up? We could have gone on the offense long ago. We would have tried to shut down their publications, which anyone can pick up at a local hotel, and which show that they can do what they want with kids of whatever age they want, and even what kind of sex they can have. The homosexuals have their national directory and it lists Miami as the most open city in the nation. I got involved only because they were asking for special privileges that violated the state law of Florida, not to mention God’s law. You know, when I was a child, you didn’t even mention the

word homosexual, much less find out what the act was about. You knew it was very bad, but you couldn't imagine what they tried to do, exactly, in terms of one taking a male role and the other taking a female role. I mean, it was too filthy to think about and you had other things to think about. So when I finally found out all the implications, it was a total revelation for me.

PLAYBOY: Then when you opposed the Dade County ordinance, at first you didn't even have a clear idea what you were opposing?

BRYANT: Well, I knew some things, because Bob had told me—he is nine years older and he has taught me a lot of things about sex. He was born in the Bronx and I was raised in the Bible Belt—what can I say? I mean, you have visions of, well, now, what can they do as two men in bed or two women in bed? But I didn't really know the nitty-gritty of the thing.

PLAYBOY: Until when?

BRYANT: I'm not going to tell you.

PLAYBOY: Wasn't it when you got a letter in January 1977 with an explicit picture enclosed?

BRYANT: Okay, yeah. And, I mean, I was absolutely appalled. I just couldn't believe it. And then, afterward, a local police sergeant gave a presentation in our church basement with slides and all about child pornography and it shocked our whole congregation. We understood then just how debased the whole thing was. I mean, it's a sin under the laws of God. And sin is like leprosy—it starts with just a little speck and you don't even notice or care. You think, That's not going to hurt me, and all of a sudden it begins to spread and you still don't worry until the sores spread to the shoulder and the pus starts oozing, but by then it's too late. God says the wages of sin are death, and one little sin brings on another. The homosexual act is just the beginning of the depravity. It then leads to—what's the word?—sadomasochism. It just gets worse as it goes on. You go further and further down the drain and it just becomes so perverted and you get into alcohol and drugs and it's so rotten that many homosexuals end up committing suicide. The worst thing is that these days, so many married men with children who don't have a happy marriage are going into the homosexual bars for satisfaction—if they're not careful, they're going to get caught up in it totally.

"What can I say? I mean, you have visions of, well, now, what can they do as two men in bed or two women in bed?"

PLAYBOY: You believe in a kind of sexual domino theory, then?

BRYANT: Lots of wives and former homosexuals have testified to me about these things.

PLAYBOY: Didn't your biggest shock about homosexuals come when you realized that male homosexuals eat each other's sperm? A Miami reporter briefly quoted you as saying the reason God calls homosexuality an abomination is that homosexuals eat spermatozoa, the building block of blood, so, therefore, homosexuals are swallowing, and presumably digesting, the essence of life?

BRYANT: I did not … um … I did not say that to any reporter. I'm not that stupid.

PLAYBOY: Did you say it to anybody?

BRYANT: I was overheard talking to a reformed homosexual on the phone and I had no idea our conversation would ever get printed. It was a very personal thing and I never dreamed it would get printed. The reporter deceived me. I was very naïve about the media then—since then, I've been trained. At that time, I was like a babe among the wolves.

PLAYBOY: But you did say it.

BRYANT: It was a personal thing. I don't want to talk about it.

PLAYBOY: Why not?

BRYANT: Because it's just too gory, too raw for most people to comprehend.

PLAYBOY: You could take this opportunity to explain yourself, rather than let it stand as an overheard conversation.

BRYANT: Well, I was witnessing to this guy, and I didn't let on that I knew he had been a homosexual, and I threw the question at him because I wasn't sure myself and I wanted to find out. I had read about this phenomenon, but I wasn't sure it was true. See, I was at my desk one night and I was reading and studying; it was about one in the morning and when I read about it——

PLAYBOY: You mean swallowing sperm?

BRYANT: Yeah, when I read about it, I about fell through my chair. I said, "Oh, God, this can't be true." That was the first time I really knew. I mean, I had seen in writing before what they did in bed, and so forth, but I never knew that they ate the male sperm. I just wanted to fall off the chair. So when this guy called, I wanted to really find out if what I'd read was true. So I said very casually, "Oh, by the way, do you know that homosexuals eat the male sperm?"

PLAYBOY: What did he say?

BRYANT: He said yes.

PLAYBOY: And?

BRYANT: And I still couldn't believe it.

PLAYBOY: Why not?

BRYANT: Well, throughout the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, men are referred to as trees. Even in the Garden of Eden, when God referred to the tree of life, He was talking about the whole spiritual salvation of men, and so forth. And in the New Testament, it says Jesus was called the fruit of the womb—which is very interesting, because even the homosexuals know this. Did you know there is a group in Seattle that calls itself The Fruit Loops?

PLAYBOY: So?

BRYANT: Why do you think the homosexuals are called fruits? It's because they eat the forbidden fruit of the tree of life. God referred to men as trees, and because the homosexuals eat the forbidden fruit, which is male sperm…. There is even a Jockey short called Forbidden Fruit. Very subtle. Did you know that?

PLAYBOY: No. We've heard only of Fruit of the Loom.

BRYANT: You see, I agree with the anti-abortion people that the beginning of life is when the male sperm fertilizes the female egg. The Scriptures talk about John the Baptist jumping in the womb when he was in the presence of the Mother Mary when Jesus was still in the womb, and that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit. That was the beginning of life and I believe that—I cannot deny what I know to be true. That's why homosexuality is an abomination of God, because life is so precious to God and it is such a sacred thing when man and woman come together in one flesh and the seed is fertilized—that's the sealing of life, that's the beginning of life. To interfere with that in any way—especially the eating of the forbidden fruit, the eating of the sperm—that's why it's such an abomination. I can't deny it. When I discuss this with Christians, it revolts them, especially when they don't know the Bible and cannot see sin in its most hideous forms. You really turn people off when you speak in these blunt terms, and they can't believe I'm saying it. But you have to tell them that it's true. It's there, it's logical and it makes the sin of homosexuality all the more hideous because it's antilife, degenerative.

PLAYBOY: Surely, you must know that the eating of sperm is not confined to homosexuals. In fact, it's quite popular in heterosexual relationships these days.

BRYANT: It's true. I agree with you. The abomination is spreading. Ideally, of course, the relationship between a man and a woman should embody oneness with God—the most natural thing is the reproducing of life and having the first fruits from that oneness together.

PLAYBOY: So sex is only for procreation?

BRYANT: Oh, no. But God created the family to be a picture of perfection. Nothing is perfect, of course, but a woman's giving herself to her husband should try to resemble perfection, just as the husband's protection of his wife should be a love like he loves his own body. How many men do that with their woman? If you could see that bliss as an expression of God's perfection, it would make you yearn to know God.

PLAYBOY: You're saying that sexual intercourse between man and wife is an acknowledgment of God?

BRYANT: Right—it's a picture of the Church, in a sense. It's a beautiful thing, ordained of God, meant to be enjoyed and to be pleasurable, not looked on as debased or ungodly or dirty, as so many Christians unfortunately see it. Sex was never meant to be that. God tells us it's like a mystery—he means a coming together that releases the joy you have in that moment of climax when there is a oneness with you and your husband and with God. It's physical, but it becomes spiritual. I've often thought that at that moment, you experience the release and the purity that God meant to be…. Well, it's like the way Christ loves the Church. When you come together, it's like when the Church is brought up to meet Christ in the air, when we will all take on immortality. There is a releasing of all the burdens of the mortal body and such sheer release of joy and oneness—it's almost like floating in the air and you know someday you will be able to meet Christ. I think the reason there's so much promiscuity and so much emphasis on sex these days is because people leave out the spiritual part.

"When I read about it, I about fell through my chair. That was the first time I really knew that they ate the male sperm."

PLAYBOY: Is birth control an abomination against the Lord? Is taking the pill a sin?

BRYANT: No, because the way it's done, you are not wasting the sperm. I've never really gone into this before. I've never had that question asked of me. I do think it's important to realize God's glory when you come together—if there's not the oneness of the spirit, soul and body, then there's an imperfection. This whole discussion is so delicate—that's why it's so important that the government and the public schools should not take the responsibility to explain sex to our children—it is the province of the parents.

PLAYBOY: Some parents may be less qualified to explain it than educators are.

BRYANT: I don't care, the child should hear it from the parents.

PLAYBOY: Many parents refuse to accept the responsibility. What then?

BRYANT: I know. It's not easy. I don't have all the answers. I know what you're talking about, because my mother and her mother didn't know how to talk about sex.

PLAYBOY: Okay, let's get back to deviant sexual practices, as you characterize homosexuality. Why did you decide to oppose the Dade County ordinance last year? You'd never taken a political stand before.

BRYANT: Right, I never had. The basic reason was because I am first and foremost a mother, and I was standing up for my rights as a mother to protect my children after I realized what the threat the homosexuals were posing meant. That's why we called our organization Save Our Children, though we've since been forced to change it to Protect America's Children, because the Save the Children Federation took us to court. The ordinance the homosexuals proposed would have made it mandatory that flaunting homosexuals be hired in both the public and the parochial schools. My children attend a religious school. Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the Constitution, and if you believe that adultery, homosexuality, drunkenness and things like that violate your religious standards, you then have a right to prevent a teacher from standing up in front of your children and promoting sin. We were fighting religious bigotry. What gives the homosexual any more right to stand up in front of children and talk about his sexual preferences than a man who has a great Dane as his lover?

PLAYBOY: Bestiality is just around the corner, then?

BRYANT: Under the proposed ordinance, every sexual deviation would have been legally acceptable among schoolteachers. Right behind the homosexual community in Dade County was a group of prostitutes who were going to initiate similar legislation permitting whores to stand up in front of kids in the classroom and proclaim their sexual deviation and then ply their trade. Ad infinitum. The issue had nothing to do with what people do in the privacy of their bedrooms. If two men or two women live together and don't flaunt their deviant lifestyle, fine. Let them do what they want. But when they try to interfere with my right as a mother to raise my children the way I see fit, then I draw the line. I mean, no one got very excited about the ordinance—no one knew it was an issue, really, it was so secretive. It had passed two readings at the Dade County Commission before we even became aware of it. On the third reading, it would have become law—we only had a week and a half to try to stop it. The ordinance sounded very simple—it said there should be no discrimination in the areas of housing, public accommodations and employment. Who wants to discriminate? It's a no-no. But the discrimination they were talking about was not based on race or religion. Homosexuals would have us believe they're born that way, because they're in total darkness and they've never been told any different. But if they're a legitimate minority group, then so are nail biters, dieters, fat people, short people and murderers. Who will be the next in line to ask for special privileges? When it came down to a courtroom hearing, the homosexuals in Dade County said it's not a matter of housing, public accommodations and employment—we're already there, they said. Which they definitely are. They said, "The point is that we want to come out of the closet, we want to tell you where we're at and we don't want to lose our jobs because of it." One of the homosexual leaders made a statement before the Community Relations Board. He said he became a homosexual when he was seven years old but that it bothered him that he never had a role model to look up to.

PLAYBOY: Aren't you just resorting to the same kind of argument that Joe McCarthy used in the Fifties against communism? He insisted that Americans could not be exposed to it lest they immediately turn into raving Marxists. Do you think g"flaunting homosexuals," as you put it, will automatically turn America's children into homosexuals?

BRYANT: Of course it's not just an overnight thing. What happens is that the door then opens onto a lot of other things. It may not have an

people are playing with it. They think, g“I’m not really a homosexual, I don’t do it that often.” They don’t really want to align themselves with the depravity of the homosexual community, per se. They’re enjoying their cake but not eating it, you see.

PLAYBOY: Let’s return to the Dade County ordinance for a moment. What were the immediate consequences of your standing up against it?

BRYANT: Threats, blackmail, boycotts, intimidation. I won’t say who, but someone threatened our business manager in New York that if we continued with the campaign, he would start the rumor that Bob was a former homosexual.

PLAYBOY: Was he?

BRYANT: Of course not. But during the time of the referendum, we lost 70 percent of our bookings. You’ve got to remember that, predominantly, I’m a variety artist and the bulk of my income comes from performing—Florida Citrus is only a small part. We had no conventions in 1977 and I had been one of the top convention entertainers in the country. I did a grand total of two state fairs in 1977.

The militant homosexuals will go to any extreme to try to get me out of my livelihood. In New Orleans, they went to the manager of the New Orleans Pops orchestra and tried to prove to him that I had been responsible for local homosexual suicides. Every place I go, there are bomb threats. Every place we go, they send half a dozen people from other towns and they come a week before and organize a protest against me. We were really surprised that they had the power to do what they do. It’s not the democratic way at all—if we had lost, we would have said, well, we feel bad, but that’s it. Well, they lose and they punish you for winning. I had no idea of the viciousness or vindictiveness of the homosexual community. I was very naive in that respect.

PLAYBOY: Any regrets? Would you do it all over again?

BRYANT: I would still stand, I would still make the same choice. I might change some of the statements that were made that were not mine, but unfortunately, that’s part of what you have to go through when you’re working with people from all walks of life who are part of your organization. It hasn’t been easy. I don’t think anybody wants to see his livelihood stripped away from him, and you’ve got to come to grips with the threats to your family—that’s something you’d never ask for; you’d have to be crazy to ask for it. But we also got to work with some wonderful people. Seventy percent of the Jewish rabbis supported us, as well as the majority of the black community. That was a wonderful experience.

PLAYBOY: What did you think when the Florida Citrus Commission renewed its contract with you?

BRYANT: I thought it was a courageous thing to do and, of course, I was very glad.

PLAYBOY: Is the tide now turning on your behalf? Your contract was renewed, you were named Most Admired Woman by readers of Good Housekeeping and liberal columnists such as Nat Hentoff have come out defending your right of free speech.

BRYANT: It’s too early to say, and I don’t know what the homosexuals still have up their sleeve. They are very desperate people who will stop at nothing.

PLAYBOY: Do you feel any responsibility for homosexual suicides? Or for the murder of homosexuals? There was a lawsuit filed against you in San Francisco last year, later dismissed, that charged you with creating a homophobic hysteria that resulted in the murder of a young homosexual.

BRYANT: Yes, that’s true. But I had nothing to do with any murders. There is a homosexual murder every day in San Francisco. It made me sad and it shocked me that anyone would think I had anything to do with it, but my conscience is clear. I can’t be responsible for how people react to what happened in Dade County. My stand was not taken out of homophobia but out of love for them. Look, I’m not as stupid as people make me out to be, especially concerning homosexuality. In Richmond, four of them came up to me. One of them gave me the record Hurricane Anita and looked at me like he was waiting for me to faint dead away or turn pale, and I said I was familiar with it, and I wrote down a Scripture and said, "I love you." And one other guy came on real strong and he said, "You’ve broken my heart and I cry all night and day because you hate us." I said, "I don’t hate you, I love you." I took his hand and said, "I love you; can you say you love me?" This guy started shaking. He said, "I can’t say that."

PLAYBOY: That record is just one of the satiric attacks made upon you. There have been more Anita Bryant jokes than Polish jokes in the past year. Rod McKuen said—

BRYANT: He’s really a … nothing.

PLAYBOY: People like Johnny Carson and Bob Hope and Martha Raye have also made jokes about you.

BRYANT: Right, and I really was hurt by them. I mean, I could tell you stories from being on U.S.O. tours with Bob Hope and Martha Raye that would make your hair stand on end, but I won’t. Yet they attack me. I asked my son Bobby one day about it and he said, "Well, they have a lot of jokes around school about you."

PLAYBOY: Dirty jokes?

BRYANT: No, funny ones. And he said, "They don’t bug me."

PLAYBOY: What other kinds of repercussions did you suffer from the so-called gaycott of you?

BRYANT: Well, I couldn’t get booked on virtually any of the talk shows, where I’d always been welcomed before. And I recorded a song called “There’s Nothing Like the Love Between a Woman and a Man,” a real upbeat, down-home country tune. All the record companies agreed it was great, but none of them wanted to risk putting it out.

PLAYBOY: In some jurisdictions, homosexual behavior is now prosecuted as a misdemeanor. Are you in favor of returning it to a felony status?

BRYANT: Yes, I think so. Any time you water down the law, it just makes it easier for immorality to become tolerated.

PLAYBOY: Let’s say two adult men are caught in bed, fornicating. Under felony provisions, they could be sent to jail for 20 years. Do you think 20 years in prison would rehabilitate them?

BRYANT: Why make it easy for them? I think it only helps to condone it and to make it easier for kids who wouldn’t be so concerned if it were just a misdemeanor, whereas a felony might make them think twice, especially the younger ones.

PLAYBOY: What if it doesn’t? Boys should spend 20 years in jail for one act?

BRYANT: If they’re on good behavior and everything, and they really—

PLAYBOY: What are you saying—that someone will be rehabilitated and turned away from homosexuality in prison? Surely, you know that

"Jesus spoke about adultery and fornication. He was very plain on it. Jesus never wavered from sin one iota."

prisoners are gang-raped routinely. Someone jailed on a homosexual charge is particularly vulnerable. You must know that.

BRYANT: They'll have plenty of time to think. Just because prisons are corrupt and not doing the right job in rehabilitation because they don't have enough spiritual emphasis doesn't mean that there should not be a strong punishment for that.

PLAYBOY: Does punishment lead to redemption?

BRYANT: It's in the Bible.

PLAYBOY: Twenty years in jail?

BRYANT: Well, there's no easy answer and I'm sure we don't have all the answers.

PLAYBOY: You're avoiding the question, not just the answer. To stick a kid in jail for committing a homosexual act would seem to most people the greater crime—and sin. If anything were going to reinforce his homosexuality, it would be prison.

BRYANT: But, you see, if there are no consequences for any kind of sin, if there's no law and order, if there's no price to be paid for—

PLAYBOY: But you're advocating making homosexuality a felony. The price would certainly exceed the g"crime," if you had your way.

BRYANT: Are you saying do away with the law totally? Look, I'm just thinking of a deterrent to keep young people from going into it. That's why you've got the ministry in the prisons. They're trying to find an answer there. Maybe the answer is to put the homosexuals in a different place in the prison.

PLAYBOY: That's already the case; do you think that would deter them from homosexuality? How familiar are you with prisons? Have you ever performed inside one?

BRYANT: Yes, I did the Huntsville Prison Rodeo. It was great—the audience was very captive. [*Laughs*]

PLAYBOY: Did you get a firsthand look at the prison conditions?

BRYANT: No, I've read about them and I have mixed feelings, because I've heard a lot of radical people who come out and say the prisons are terrible, but you know where they're coming from—they want to do away with law and order because they're rebellious against God. I know what the cause of the prisons is. The cause is sin.

PLAYBOY: So for one sin, the sin of one man making love to another man, you would send them to jail? That's the Christian approach?

BRYANT: As a Christian, I know the only answer is the Gospel.

PLAYBOY: And you would set it up so that the Gospel you advocate would be preached to imprisoned human beings surrounded by the very crime you accuse them of.

BRYANT: All right, you have a point. Especially when you put it in terms of kids; I would like to be working with them to save them from their sins.

PLAYBOY: Let's explore some of your theological beliefs. For instance, nowhere in the New Testament does Jesus make any statement about homosexuality.

BRYANT: Well, Jesus did. He spoke about adultery and fornication.

PLAYBOY: But you didn't conduct a campaign against heterosexual swingers' teaching your kids. The fact remains that Jesus never even mentioned homosexuality and virtually every reference to it is in the Old Testament.

BRYANT: But he talked about fornication and he said, g"If you love me, you'll keep my commandments." He was very plain on it. Jesus never wavered from sin one iota. To say that Jesus wasn't against sin is ridiculous. A lot of people who want to interpret the Bible for their own ends, such as the so-called Metropolitan Community Church, ignore parts of it to condone their immoral lifestyle. They make a sham of everything Jesus stood for. If he was not truly the Son of God, then he's just … nothing. It sounds like it's contradicting itself, but when you read the whole Bible, all of it together, then you understand why at certain points it seems like it's contradicting, but yet it's not. God is simply trying to explain the truth.

PLAYBOY: When did you come to that realization? When did you first sit down and read the Bible from cover to cover?

BRYANT: I never have. I have tried.

PLAYBOY: That's surprising.

BRYANT: See, I never went to a Catholic or a Baptist school where they made us do that.

PLAYBOY: Why haven't you read it on your own?

BRYANT: I don't know. Why did you ask me that? I just learned to love the Bible and read it and I read it all the time. But I've never had the time to read it from cover to cover.

PLAYBOY: What is your interpretation of heaven?

BRYANT: The Bible describes heaven as a place where there'll be no sorrow, no tears nor sin. No day and no night; a continuous joy and peace. I've been so high with the Lord that I believe I've had a foretaste of glory divine, of what it's going to be like to not have to put up with pressure and hassles from the physical body. There will be no temptation from the Devil, no evil thoughts will enter your head. I won't have to worry about a schedule, I won't have to live by my little black book, I won't have to write everything down, I won't have to be interviewed. I won't have to sing unless I feel like it. God talks about heaven in a very literal way. He says the streets are paved with gold, a pure gold, and he talks about the pearly gates—it'll be pure pearl. I believe it will literally have those things that are described; that's why it was described that way. A lot of the Bible I take literally.

PLAYBOY: And hell?

BRYANT: That is a place God did not make for mankind—he made that as a place for the Devil, a place he could put him because he was the maestro of music in heaven, and he betrayed God. God created hell to pass Lucifer down into it. In the meantime, he let him become friends of this world, and that's why we have to suffer a spiritual warfare until he comes back for His own.

PLAYBOY: Do you believe in purgatory?

BRYANT: No.

PLAYBOY: All or nothing, then. How does the Devil tempt Anita Bryant?

BRYANT: Through my kids, my husband, just getting on my nerves; my family is where I'm most vulnerable. If I get really tired, I can put my garbage on Bob very easily. Not like before—we used to really fight.

PLAYBOY: But how does the Devil get to you?

BRYANT: Like he gets to anybody. I know the days when I am so beaten down I can see 12 demons around me with billy clubs on my head and I know they're there and I verbally cast them out. I say, g"Satan, get thee behind me." I mean, you can't let clown your guard for a moment. You simply have to remember that God is your best friend and know the peace God can give you when you're in the flow of the stream of his wisdom and love. It's like they call me Hurricane Anita—the Weather Service sent me a letter telling me the name had been picked out 10 years ago, for the storm that hit last spring. It was so weird, the timing. I just thought it was another of God's jokes. He has such a sense of humor, he really does, you know. So some Weather Service people sent me a picture of the hurricane and in the middle of all this turmoil is a perfect eye of stillness. That's me, in the center.

PLAYBOY: You often quote Leviticus and Deuteronomy—the g"lawbooks" of the Old Testament—to support your beliefs against homosexuality. But the Bible is so ambiguous that people on fundamentally different sides can quote it against each other to support their positions.

BRYANT: There were certain things in the Old Testament that you had to do in order to be clean and righteous. Yet when Jesus came, he fulfilled the law. In other words, it's not the Ten Commandments that save you, it's the fact that Jesus died on the cross that saves you. You are not bound by all the things that it says to do in the Old Testament.

PLAYBOY: So you pick the ones that suit you?

BRYANT: Jesus was the fulfillment. He told us we were not to be con

cerned by the things the Old Testament said—that kind of thing—again.

PLAYBOY: Yet you consistently quote the Old Testament as a justification for your positions, particularly regarding homosexuality. It reminds us of the Scopes trial in Tennessee in 1925, when William Jennings Bryan insisted on a literal interpretation of the creation.

BRYANT: Well, when you start nitpicking, when we try in our own feeble minds to understand God … God says, g"My thoughts are not your thoughts." There's no way you can comprehend what creation is. You're trying to come to a logical conclusion as to how God did it and there's no way we can know how God did it. From man's point of view, miracles never happen. From God's point of view, they do.

PLAYBOY: Does there have to be a conflict between belief in evolution and belief in God?

BRYANT: Except that Darwin did not believe in God.

PLAYBOY: That doesn't answer the question.

BRYANT: Look, because of his atheistic influence, Darwin is taught in the public schools as fact. That's fine, if people want to believe that, but I say we must also put Genesis and the Bible in the school teachings as an alternate belief. And, look, really, there's no way I can answer your question, because I don't know how God did it. I just believe he did it. It's like when Moses parted the Red Sea. To man, that was an impossible feat, yet it was one of the great miracles of the Bible when Moses lifted his rod again and the sea closed. I mean, it boggles your mind to think of the majesty and supernatural power it took to do that. My pastor put it this way: He said, for God, it took only the flick of his pinkie to part the Red Sea.

PLAYBOY: God has a pinkie?

BRYANT: Oh, I don't know, it's just an illustration. Actually, the biggest miracle of all was the constraint God showed not to split the earth in half when he parted the Red Sea. What I'm saying is that God didn't have to do things man's way. He spoke the universe into existence.

PLAYBOY: But even from your point of view, is it not still a miracle to create the universe over a period of billions of years?

BRYANT: Why would he take that kind of time? He doesn't have to.

PLAYBOY: Why not? If he is eternal, time is nothing to him.

BRYANT: Well, that's true … but the Bible says God just spoke the universe into existence.

PLAYBOY: Many Biblical scholars aren't nearly as fundamentalist as you are in believing such things.

BRYANT: I don't know! What do I know? We'll know those answers when we get to heaven, all right? And you can ask God yourself!

PLAYBOY: Do you think that people who either don't believe in Jesus as God—Jews, for example—or those who have never been exposed to Christian teaching are condemned to hell?

BRYANT: Well, I personally have to believe that, because I believe God's word. I didn't write the Bible, and that's what the Bible says. But there are a lot of Jews today who are accepting Jesus as the Messiah.

PLAYBOY: What about those who are not—the vast majority, in other words?

BRYANT: You're putting me on the spot again. As much as I would like to say other people can be saved by some other means than Jesus, I cannot deny what I know from the Bible. It doesn't make me feel good or give me any gratification to think someone's going to hell. I have great respect for my Jewish brothers. But I am what I am, I believe what I believe and I can't stick my head in the ground and say, "Well, I believe if people are really good and if they live by other standards, they can get absolved"—God just didn't say that. This whole question is very hard for me, because I have come to love Rabbi Weberman and the other Jewish people I have worked with in Dade County very much. I have a great respect for them, so I don't think in terms of hell-fire and damnation.

PLAYBOY: Presumably, you feel the same way about other faiths—the Moslem faith, for instance.

BRYANT: God is using so many people all over the world to get the Gospel to the Moslems, to everybody. Whether a person will accept or reject the Gospel is between him and God. I'm not responsible for that. I mean, God could just have made us all into robots, but he took a chance. He wanted us to choose his way.

PLAYBOY: If you tried to tell a devout Moslem about Jesus as savior, he would be just as immune to hearing your message as you would be if he tried to tell you Mohammed was the Prophet.

BRYANT: I don't have the answer for that. I can't approach it from an intellectual point of view. There's a lot of things I don't understand about God.

PLAYBOY: Where is your sense of justice? If someone truly lives a good life, if he's sincere and moral, just because he doesn't believe in Jesus—

BRYANT: Even though he is sincere, he is sincerely wrong. Sincerity doesn't make you right. The homosexual community believes it's sincerely right too.

"”The press has placed me in a stereotyped box. I'm not a prude, but that's the image they want to portray.”"

PLAYBOY: What about some Pygmy or some South American Indian who has literally never heard of Jesus and never will, who has his own set of gods that he's worshiped for thousands of years? He's going to hell too?

BRYANT: That's all the more reason we have the responsibility to pay for missionaries to get the truth to them. I mean, I've heard weird stories all over the world about where missionaries have gone to odd places and where people have been saved just by seeing a torn page of the Bible on the floor. There are some weird salvation experiences all over the world. I believe that it's God's plan that all should be saved.

PLAYBOY: But, according to your way of thinking, Jews, Moslems, Pygmies, Eskimos and atheists are going to hell.

BRYANT: According to God's word, they do. I mean, if there's no heaven and no hell, what are we talking about? You know, your problem is that you have to have all the answers. It's impossible to have all the answers!

PLAYBOY: How do you feel about the inferior status conferred on women in the Bible? Would you agree, as some women do, that it's because the Bible was written by men in the context of the times?

BRYANT: Well, no, men didn't write it, the Holy Spirit did. Most of the preachers are men, though, and I think that's brought about an unhealthy balance. It's a thing where you hear so much about g"women, submit yourselves to your husbands," and that is Biblical, where women must submit first but it also says, "submit yourselves one to another." It has to be a submission of both women to men and men to women.

PLAYBOY: But you've also said that women are weaker vessels than men.

BRYANT: Well, they are. I don't think that has a bad connotation.

PLAYBOY: Weak isn't exactly a complimentary term.

BRYANT: Well, it's a Biblical term, you see…. All I know is God did have a plan. I don't always want to agree with it and I don't always understand it, but it's like the clay trying to understand the potter. All I

know is that he did set the man over the woman. When he said we were to become as one flesh, he meant it in all ways. So if I don't submit to Bob—

PLAYBOY: Why shouldn't he have to submit to you first?

BRYANT: I believe that it's easier for the woman to submit. That's Biblical.

PLAYBOY: Why?

BRYANT: I don't know, but I just think that a woman has the capability of submitting. I really thought in my younger days that I could do anything that Bob could do and probably better, and for a time, maybe I showed that I could. But I had a limit. I could take only so much, whereas God has equipped men to take much more responsibility—he made them to be the head and he gave them a certain ability. Women come at things with a much more emotional point of view.

PLAYBOY: What do you mean, emotional?

BRYANT: I can't explain it. I just think women have a softer approach. We're more vulnerable, just like in the Garden of Eden. Bob has an ability to see things from a totally different perspective than I. I am much more trusting. Women are vulnerable as far as people are concerned, whereas men can see through things. Of course, I'm talking about the perfect specimen—everybody's different. But I believe there is an innate ability that men have that's different from women's. I think women have much more of a capacity for pain, for instance—no question there. I've seen it time and time again. I know I have much more endurance than Bob in many areas, and yet for decisions and responsibilities, I got into an awful lot of trouble by taking on more than I was able to handle, and when Bob finally saw that, he took the responsibility for that and it was a tremendous burden lifted off my shoulders.

PLAYBOY: If Bob told you to do something right now that was against the grain of your thought, would you simply submit to him?

BRYANT: I might rebel against it—and I have many times—but, Biblically, I would submit, yes.

PLAYBOY: You've gone against your own better judgment?

BRYANT: Oh, yes. For me to learn to submit was one of the most difficult things in the world, because from the time I was a little child, I was a very hardheaded, independent human being. Yet God showed me my weaknesses, showed me where I was the weaker vessel in many respects, and I still didn't want to recognize that. It was in real submission, when I was able to let Bob take over, that I really realized I was usurping his authority by not allowing him to be the person God meant him to be. Submission really means to throw oneself under, so the decision an equal person has to make is to become the one underneath, and that's a matter of choice. Jesus Christ is a terrific example of one who submitted. And either he was who he said he was or he was the greatest liar ever on the face of this earth.

I am not intimidated by being called the weaker vessel, because I know that in many areas I am the stronger vessel. I mean, for a long time, I really would have been in agreement with the feminist movement, particularly for the anger I had toward my father that I transferred to Bob. I usurped Bob's authority in many ways for many years and our marriage was rocky, really rocky, until I recognized I was in rebellion against God, and I got right and submitted. I'm not saying it was easy. I've read some of the feminist materials these days, and some of them get so uptight when the Bible refers to "man" when God talks about the individual, but there was much discrimination in the Jewish heritage against the woman, so when Jesus Christ came, he freed them and made them equal spiritually. Now, we all know there's a tremendous difference between men and women, but we have different roles. It really bothers me that these feminists get so uptight—they have this attitude. It's so rebellious, not only against God but against man. You can tell they hate men and they hate even the word of God—they want to change the word of God.

PLAYBOY: You mentioned your anger toward your father. Let's talk about your upbringing. For instance, most people would be surprised to learn that the first liquid to enter Anita Bryant's throat was a slug of corn-mash moonshine.

BRYANT: Yeah, it's kind of ironic, isn't it? You see, I was born dead. My mother was visiting her parents, my Grandma and Grandpa Berry, and I was a month late in coming. When I came, somehow my mother's system had filled up with poison and I was all black and blue and not breathing. My grandfather was not yet a Christian and he picked up the doctor and said, "You blankety-blank son of a you-know-what, either you save my daughter and my granddaughter or I'll kill you." Well, the doctor sort of had to go along. He told Grandma Berry, "All right, get me a pan of ice water and some whiskey and make a strong pot of real thick coffee as black as you can make it." Then he stuck my head in the water and that shocked me into gasping for breath, and Grandma got the whiskey and they got that down me. I vomited and filled a big pan full of black-green poison. I shrank from nine pounds down to a tiny thing—and that's how I came into the world. I was born in my Uncle Luther Berry's bed—that's prophetic, you see, because he's a Baptist minister.

PLAYBOY: You recovered from birth trauma sufficiently that you were able to make your singing debut at the age of two, though?

BRYANT: Yeah, Grandpa Berry felt I was his special grandchild. When I was six months old, he'd rock me in his arms and say, "Sing, Anita, sing!" and I'd yell back to him. So when I was two, he bribed a preacher in the church to let me sing "Jesus Loves Me"—or at least he nagged him to death. And people who would come over to the house, I'd set them down and say, "Do you want me to sing for you?" I was a brash kid, real ornery. Grandpa used to call me the brave one, because one time during a tornado, I went rushing out of the house after a washtub that was rolling down the street and he had to rescue me. Later on, when I was learning to ride horses bareback, I'd get thrown 50 feet and get back up and try again, and so the neighbors would call me brave, too. I didn't think I was so brave.

PLAYBOY: Were you a happy child?

BRYANT: You have to remember that my parents were first divorced when I was two years old and a lot of my insecurities started then. Mother had to go to work and I had to live with my relatives, and that affects a child greatly. They had married very young and they really had no idea of the responsibilities of marriage. I had lots of nightmares after the divorce and I walked in my sleep. I was a very hyperactive kid and a very sickly child. I caught everything that came around. I had the measles, the chicken pox—and every disease I had was like the worst in medical history. I was anemic and had worms. I had pneumonia about eight times. We didn't have the money to go to the doctor every time I was sick, so it wasn't until much later that I found out that I was a highly allergic person. Even today, I can't take certain foods—I eat beans and I itch all night long. I'm allergic to dust—lots of things. And nobody in rural Oklahoma knew anything about nutrition, so my meals were imbalanced. I was raised on fried quail, frogs' legs, wild rabbit, squirrel, venison—stuff my dad or grandpa would hunt. I do remember parts of my childhood as being happy and other parts I've blocked out because it hurts too much. I guess I was happiest when I was eight years old and my parents were remarried, and I was baptized and came to know Christ as my personal savior.

Most of my life, I've been a real go-getter, the original Unsinkable Molly Brown. I've been down but never out. Even when I was very young I was determined to be a star. I told the Lord, "Lord, let me be a star." I was a strong-minded, independent kid. Remember—we were really living in the sticks. There was only one television in the neighborhood, and on Saturday nights we'd go over and watch it. I remember the first show I ever saw was Ed Sullivan. My dad was a real roustabout—he went from job to job, working in oil fields and what have you, doing what he could. I mean, it was the sticks and basic things were hard to come by. We lived in a trailer for a year and a half and went to the bathroom in the woods. Even the local school had outhouses—and that was

when I was in the sixth grade. Your life was centered around God, your church, your family. But primarily the church.

PLAYBOY: Were your parents as fervent as you in their religious convictions?

BRYANT: No. They got away from the church; they really never had a church home. I felt responsible and I blamed myself.

PLAYBOY: What happened after your parents remarried?

BRYANT: We moved to Oklahoma City and I thought it was the end of the world. It was the biggest city I'd ever seen and the adjustment was real hard. Then my mom and dad started fighting again. They divorced again when I was 12. I didn't see my father for a long time afterward—he moved to another city, found another job, and we'd hear from him once in a while, but it was a long time between phone calls. A lot of that period I don't remember. I guess I really don't want to. It was real painful and it just about killed my mother. She was a very submissive wife—she was too submissive and it angered me. She let my dad step all over her and she would have done anything to get him back. Mother had a terrible inferiority complex. My father was a very proud man, a hard worker, but he didn't communicate well with his family. When Daddy left, I had to sort of become the head of the household—iron the clothes, make the dinner and generally be supportive. I learned to relate to adults and I seemingly had great sophistication, though I really don't. Life was hard for my mother, because she had to learn everything the hard way. I mean, she married when she was 18 and she didn't even know anything about sex until after her honeymoon night.

PLAYBOY: Did she talk to you about sex?

BRYANT: When the time came, she tried, but it would have been better if she had described more. Even so, she did better than her mother. Grandma married when she was 15 and never told a soul about anything. Grandma Berry was love personified and a real pioneer woman, but she did have her hang-ups. Anyway, after the second divorce, Mother had to rely on us kids—and trust us in our dating. We were proud that she could trust us. It was almost like growing up with my big sister rather than my mother—she was only 18 years older than me. I knew she blamed God for her problems—and she was very bitter about God. Eventually, she remarried, we moved to Tulsa and my mother rejoined the church. She was really beautiful when we were growing up; she had a great figure. She's chunky now since she stopped smoking, but that's okay, because you want your mother to smell sweet.

PLAYBOY: So you resented your father?

BRYANT: I tried very hard to forgive him for what lie had done to my mother—and to me. Because of him, I think I went through life for a long time hating all men, including my husband, Bob. It took me a long time to get over my resentment of Daddy. For many years, I thought I'd forgiven him, when I really hadn't. It wasn't until 1974 that I truly forgave him, when I realized that I couldn't blame him for his actions. But it took a long time, let me tell you.

PLAYBOY: How did your musical ability progress?

BRYANT: People kept saying, "How can such a big voice come from such an itty-bitty child?" It's just a natural gift that God gave me. I have natural rhythm, a quality you either have or you don't. It was in my blood and I was determined to make the best of it. I'd spend most every weekend traveling around the state and singing before the Lions Club, the Elks, that sort of thing. I was billed as Little Miss Terrific. By the time I was 12, I had my own television show. I'd won a contest on the Gizmo Goodkin Talent Show and I got my own 15-minute show every Friday night. I had to become an adult real young. In some ways I was ready, but in other ways I was robbed of having a nice normal childhood.

PLAYBOY: Did you have normal childhood fears?

BRYANT: Oh, yes. I remember one time when we were living in a bad part of Oklahoma City, after Daddy left for good, there was a Peeping Tom around. One night I was sleeping with my mother and she heard a noise and ran to the back door to make sure it was locked, and somebody grabbed the doorknob and tried to open it. Then she ran to the front door and just as she got there, somebody tried to get in the front door, too. It was a very frightening experience. So afterward, Mother went to bed with a butcher knife. As far as a physical experience is concerned, I've never been afraid—I always thought I could do anything. But spooky movies used to freak me out.

PLAYBOY: Do they still?

BRYANT: Yes; I would not see Jaws or The Exorcist. In fact, most movies made these days I find morally objectionable. But one movie I saw as a kid that really impressed me was So Dear to My Heart. It was an old Disney movie in which a little kid who didn't have much money raised this little black lamb and entered him in the contest at the state fair. The black lamb didn't win, but he got a special ribbon—he was a loser, and I identified with him and the movie has stuck in my head forever.

I really do think I grew up too quick. Bob tells me I never had a real childhood because I'm so serious about so many things. I think the thing I've had to learn as an adult is a sense of humor. I don't mean learn it, really, but just to be able to laugh at myself in different situations. You know, knowing how to relax and just be silly, do silly things. It's taken a lot of pain for me to get to a place where I can have a sense of humor. Oh, I always had a kind of cynical, straightforward one. In a way, I guess I've always been funny—not to everybody but to people who know me. My friends tell me I'm a big tease all the time.

PLAYBOY: Did your sense of humor help you when the jokes started during the Dade County campaign?

BRYANT: Yeah. A lot of the jokes that are told about me are not really filthy or vicious—well, I've learned to laugh at them. I got a big kick out of one cartoon in The Miami Herald that showed me leaning over some guy's shoulder and saying, "Oh, I think I saw one over there underneath the Sunshine Tree." And I was bending over and my bottom was real huge and there was a flag on it. I thought, Well, they could have made my bottom a little smaller. They really thought they were hurting me, when really it's so far from the truth it's funny. But I liked the flag. At least they caught the fact that I am patriotic. But I didn't like the big bottom. So I've learned more how to relax and be silly about some things. Not everything, of course—I never read silly novels, for instance.

PLAYBOY: What do you read?

BRYANT: I read constantly, but I don't read nonreligious stuff. I don't have the time.

PLAYBOY: Have you read the classics? Shakespeare, Melville, Henry James …?

BRYANT: I read Hemingway and stuff like that in school. I loved The Old Man and the Sea. The theme is nonviolence and I hate violence. There's so much of it on television these days, it makes me nervous. I loved reading romantic stories—I loved Wuthering Heights when I read it a long time ago—but I don't read those kinds of things anymore. I used to read books that would make me fantasize—romance stories and what have you. I've since learned…. It's like the movies. I loved romantic movies like Gone with the Wind, but I realized the effect of that kind of thing—when your home life isn't ideal, you seek it somewhere else, so that your natural relationship with your husband becomes distorted. For a long time, that was a real problem with me and Bob, because I was preserving my own ideal—Hollywood's ideal—and ignoring the real problems that come up between a husband and a wife. It's the same thing with the modern-day housewife and the afternoon soap operas. Let's face it—the housewives identify with the soap operas because the shows uplift them from their humdrum daily life. They compare their own lives with the TV show, rather than remembering God's word—it's bound to affect them badly. The women are told it's OK to have an affair if their home life is frustrating. Just plain garbage. They watch television because it's a vicarious thrill to live that life—to those poor bored women, the grass is always greener on the other side,

and they are tempted by Satan to believe his side is the way, so that by the time the husband comes home after a hard day at the office, the housewife hates the box he's put her in. What she's missing is the challenge she can create—what greater responsibility is there than to be a loving wife and mother, to compensate for the things her husband is missing?

PLAYBOY: Let's back up a moment. What gave your career its biggest push?

BRYANT: Arthur Godfrey. One of his talent scouts came to Tulsa and held a competition. I won hands down, week after week. I was determined I would win. When I won, the decision to go to New York was automatic—I didn't even have to pray about it, until my pastor talked to me. I really didn't have peace in my heart about leaving for the big time. What if God says no? I thought. I was miserable until I prayed to God and he gave a yes right back to me. I can't explain it, but I just knew it would be okay.

PLAYBOY: But you were already a star, in terms of Oklahoma. How did that affect your teenage life? In terms of boy-girl social intercourse?

BRYANT: Well, it didn't help my self-image. I was kind of scrawny—I'd never get the captain of the football team, I knew, so it was surprising to me that I got to date a lot of neat guys. As a matter of fact, I dated my pastor's son for three years. We made plans to get married. Oh, we were so perfect—he had a beautiful voice and we sang together in the church choir. I just adored him. But one night we went out in his car and he pulled out a cigarette. g"Look, you don't really know me," he said. I said, "Of course, I'm surprised that you smoke, but what does that have to do with us?" He told me he wanted to live it up and get his kicks. So we broke up and, immediately, he started going with a gal who had a bad reputation. It just broke my heart. I wanted to die. I felt the world was coming to an end and I didn't even go to school for a week. I was just sick. I decided then that I wouldn't marry until I was 25.

PLAYBOY: But you were glamorous by small-town standards. Surely, Satan tempted you in numerous ways—such as sex. How did you resist? Or did you?

BRYANT: See, the kids today have a much harder time dealing with sex, because it's no longer g"in" to be a virgin. In my time, when I went to Will Rogers High School, it was not the hip thing to do to go to bed with somebody, or even to let a boy fondle you—you just didn't do that. Some girls did it, sure, but their reputation was ruined all over town. And because I was such a hardworking girl, I didn't date that much. I concentrated on my career, my church activities and my grade-point average, and I was just too busy to be tempted by the Devil. If I dated some guy who tried to pet with me, I just told him, "Look, you can take me home right now, if you want—I'm not gonna go any further. If you don't enjoy being with me as a person, just take me home." I mean, I loved the kissing part and, I must say, I had some pretty passionate feelings, too, because I'm no prude, but I knew where to stop. My faith was so much a part of me that I knew my body was a temple of God and that God held it sacred. And I knew that my husband would know if I had been promiscuous and that if I didn't save myself for my marriage, if I wasn't pure, I would miss out. The consequences just weren't worth it to me. I think a lot of it had to do with the fact that I was saved when I was eight years old and my beliefs were reinforced in the public schools then through prayer—this was before that atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair made the worship of God illegal, you see. Kids today don't even know God, unless their parents are religious.

PLAYBOY: You never let sexual temptation get out of hand, then?

BRYANT: Well, there were times when I was tempted, but because I was faithful to God, I wasn't willing to step over that line. I knew the boy would go as far as the girl would let him and, mainly, I tried not to get into situations that I couldn't get out of.

PLAYBOY: What about other teenage temptations? Is rock 'n' roll today something you disapprove of?

BRYANT: Oh, yes. In my days, the lyrics were understandable and you didn't have to slow it down to hear the dirty cuss words and the jargon that parents today can't understand.

PLAYBOY: Come on. You admit in one of your books that when you added a hard, driving beat to "Till There Was You," you achieved your first 1,000,000 seller. And even when you were coming of age in the Fifties, there were plenty of sexual double-entendres in the rock lyrics.

BRYANT: Yeah, but it's not like today, where there are a lot of rock dances and rock music that are brainwashing the kids, because it's all very promiscuous and it glorifies promiscuity and acid rock and a lot of those things. The kids get into the dirty lyrics and the beat is just very, very seductive.

PLAYBOY: What do you suppose the thrill was that Pat Boone found on Blueberry Hill?

BRYANT: All I know is that there are a lot of filthy words I've heard in listening to the radio these days that are just shameful and outright sinful. I think a lot of evil things are much more prevalent these days. I think kids growing up today have pressures that we never had in the Fifties. It's so discouraging.

PLAYBOY: Let's get back to the emergence of your career. It was Godfrey who got you out of Oklahoma?

BRYANT: Yeah. I went to New York and, I mean, he was really the king then—he ruled the roost. I went on his morning show, so I had to live in New York and scrounge like a dog to keep up my school grades. Speech was my strongest subject. English I had no problem with. Math—forget it. I just couldn't comprehend. But I did all right, all in all. I had to work hard, and I knew how to work hard. Mother, of course, was very concerned with my fate in New York. We went up there together the first time and found that the Salvation Army ran a hotel for women right on the edge of Greenwich Village—the area was a pretty good neighborhood then. And in that hotel, no men could get past the lobby—mother liked that. I met some interesting people during that period.

PLAYBOY: Like who?

BRYANT: Well, Chubby Checker—he was very hot and heavy. And Leslie Uggams—talk about a straight little girl who was really naïve…. Anyway, there were things I didn't tell Mother about.

PLAYBOY: Such as?

BRYANT: I don't want to tell you.

PLAYBOY: Oh, go ahead.

BRYANT: Well, there was this one television producer who made it clear to me that I could be a very, very big TV star if I slept with him.

PLAYBOY: You were still a virgin?

BRYANT: Absolutely. Anyway, the whole thing scared me to death. I really prayed and prayed—I wanted to make it in show business so bad. So I went to a guy who was like an uncle to me who was in the business. He asked me if I drank and I said no. So he said, "In that case, you'll have no problem." I prayed some more, and then I went to this producer's apartment for dinner. He made the overtures, but I was able to talk him out of it.

PLAYBOY: How?

BRYANT: I made sure that the cook stayed around—I didn't want to be alone with him. Anyway, it worked. The word got around and he was so embarrassed that he didn't dare try to hurt my career. Thank God.

PLAYBOY: As you did.

BRYANT: As I did.

PLAYBOY: What was your next noteworthy achievement? Entering the Miss America Pageant?

BRYANT: Not yet. When I was 16, I did a tour with Ricky Nelson. I really had a crush on him.

PLAYBOY: Was it returned in kind?

BRYANT: No. He was very big then. He liked to swing with the airline stewardesses. I was just a kid to him. I also did some tours with Fabian and Bobby Rydell, and later on, I did American Bandstand with people like Annette Funicello and Frankie Avalon—that was after I got a re

cording contract.

PLAYBOY: Then you entered the Miss Oklahoma pageant, first as Miss Tulsa, then on to the Miss America competition. Why did you do it?

BRYANT: I did it on a dare. Some of my friends made me do it. One of my basic motivations was to get the Miss America scholarship so I could go to college. I was very awkward—I had skin and weight problems. I was fairly well proportioned, but I knew I was no beauty. And most of the other girls were much older than I was—I was only 18. I had to fake my way through the pageant. And I just couldn't believe that I made Miss Oklahoma and the national finals.

PLAYBOY: Wasn't the act of parading around in a tight swimsuit a violation of your Christian ethics?

BRYANT: It did bother me. But I figured, well, you go to the beach in your swimsuit…. I didn't feel ashamed or anything, but I didn't enjoy it. It was kind of a necessary evil. My over-all attitude was that it was a one-time experience, so enjoy it. My basic weakness was in answering the judges' questions—I was not aware of world affairs and I felt very inadequate.

PLAYBOY: What did they ask you?

BRYANT: I don't even recall. I rattled on and on—I didn't know what in the Sam Hill I was talking about, even though I'd boned up all week by reading Newsweek. Part of the reward for winning the pageant was a recording contract, and I already had a recording contract. So I was quite pleased that I got as far as second runner-up, although I was really disappointed that I didn't get the Miss Congeniality trophy—I'd ended up in a tie with another gal for it, and because I made second runner-up, the judges broke the tie and gave her the trophy. I really wanted it…. It's funny, though. To this day, people come up to me and ask me what it was like to be Miss America.

"It's almost Communistic the way Phyllis Schlafly and the ones who truly represent American women cannot get forums."

PLAYBOY: What was your next step?

BRYANT: I moved to Chicago and enrolled in Northwestern University—I'd gotten an offer from The Breakfast Club to sing on the show and Northwestern had a good music school. I had no choice, really—in this business, when your career gets going, you take advantage of what you get. The pace was just running me down, I was working so hard. I was trying to do everything, I was overworked and I was very lonely in Chicago.

PLAYBOY: No boyfriends?

BRYANT: Well, kind of unofficially, I was engaged to Pat Boone's brother, Nick Todd. We didn't have a ring or anything, but we dated when we could and went to church together. That wasn't his real name—he changed it because he didn't want to feel he was making it because of his famous brother. I'd first met Nick in New York when I was doing the Godfrey show. We were very close and I think we were in love with love more than anything else—there weren't that many straight guys around and he was available and I was available and we hit it off. I went to Nashville and met his parents and everything….

PLAYBOY: And then Bob Green entered your life. That was in 1959?

BRYANT: Yeah, right after I went to crown the new Miss Tulsa. Bobby Darin was the m.c. for the ceremony and he asked me for a date. I told him I had to leave for a disc jockeys' convention in Miami that night to promote my records—and that's where I met Bob Green. He was a real big glamorous disc jockey then. Bob met me at the Miami airport and I took one look at him and went "Wow!"—you know, he was a real dreamboat. He drove this neat white T-bird with his name on the side. He wore these silk suits, he came on real strong. He looked totally different than he looks now. He was so good-looking, and lie was in shape, and it was incredible. I didn't think I'd have a chance with him—I expected to get rejected. Plus, I thought he was too good-looking to be a nice boy. And he was always surrounded by these pretty gals who were just falling all over him. Everywhere we went, the girls would scream and ask for his autograph—they didn't know me from Adam. I was surprised when that first day he asked me out for a date, but I turned him down. I was too concerned about singing at the show that night, and Pat and Shirley Boone were there and I didn't want them to think I was stepping out on Nick. And I still was hurting from the rejection of the preacher's son…. I didn't want to get hurt again. I mean, Bob had every girl in town and dated the airline stewardesses and all the pretty gals. He had it made.

PLAYBOY: Yet he was interested in you?

BRYANT: He just couldn't figure me out. I was an oddity—I've always been an oddity. Anyway, after the show that night, I was sitting around in the club, getting bored, and there was smoke and drinking and all, and Bob came over and invited me for a drive, so I said okay. The moon was over Miami and we were driving down Collins Avenue and the music was on and I fell asleep! I knew I was getting to his ego, and when he drove me to the airport the next day, I never thought I'd see him again. Anyway, to make a long story short, he just kept after me—hours of long-distance phone calls, letters every day. I kept telling him not to get his hopes up, that I was engaged and that I didn't want to get married until I was 25. But he just wouldn't take no for an answer. But after Bob, I knew I just didn't feel the same way about Nick. I told Nick about Bob and we stayed good friends after we broke up. When I broke up with Nick was when I realized how much I loved Bob. We were both ready to settle down, I guess, and we had the same values—plus, Bob didn't smoke or drink, which surprised me.

PLAYBOY: And you shared the same religious beliefs?

BRYANT: Bob wasn't born again until the night before we got married.

PLAYBOY: Was that a deal you made?

BRYANT: We had no conflict about it. But I was very scared of marriage and I almost backed out at the last minute.

PLAYBOY: Was marriage everything you'd dreamed it would be?

BRYANT: It depends on what you mean.

PLAYBOY: Well, sexually, for starters.

BRYANT: I have a fantastic sex life!

PLAYBOY: Emotionally, then.

BRYANT: Marriage is very hard. Lots of problems are involved with two people working out a loving relationship and adhering to God's laws. And it upset me when I was told I could not bear children. We adopted our first child, Bobby, Jr. Later, when it turned out I could bear children, I had twins who were born months prematurely—and they almost died. Plus Bob was making a lot more money than I was then. Finally, Bob became my manager and that solved a lot of problems. He's been a great manager, and until I started getting boycotted and black-listed by the militant homosexuals last year, I had all the work I could handle.

PLAYBOY: We'll get back to that. First tell us about what you have described as the most important turning point in your life, when you had

a nervous breakdown in 1974.

BRYANT: It was not a nervous breakdown—it verged on it, certainly, but it really makes me mad that the militant homosexuals try to use it against me by saying, "She flipped out, she went crazy."

PLAYBOY: Well, what did happen?

BRYANT: I lost three people very dear to me in one year. I sang at all their funerals. Dan Topping [the former owner of the New York Yankees], my Grandpa Berry and a gal named Teddy who was like a big sister to me and who was about my age when she died. I couldn't understand why God would just nip her in the bud when she was in the prime of her life. There are few people I can share my heart with, and I could talk to Teddy about things I couldn't even talk with Bob or my pastor about. It was that deep. Then Bob developed a heart condition and almost died, and I had to think for the first time about raising four kids alone without Teddy to lean on anymore. It was after Grandpa Berry's funeral when the straw landed that broke the camel's back. It was like God wanted to put me flat on my back so the only way I could look was up. He knew I was holding out on Him and He wanted the whole of me, not just part of me. He knew I had a lot of rebellion and anger and bitterness in me. I thought I'd forgiven my daddy, but I hadn't—I still hated and resented him, and the pent-up hatred was poisoning my marriage and my relationship with people all around me. So I collapsed after Grandpa's funeral—I totally gave up. I lay down and I just…. I'd decided not to see his body, but after I sang at the funeral, I changed my mind; before they buried him I wanted to see him. When I did, I just broke down and they laid me down on the pew right next to him and I couldn't stop crying—I was just hysterical and that shook everybody up. They just couldn't comprehend that I would go under—I was like the Rock of Gibraltar, and always had been, even as a child. I'd always learned to lift my head above the jungle and be responsible, no matter what. For the first time in my life, I didn't want to be responsible anymore. I wanted to do away with all responsibility—I was so tired. I think had I been anyone else, I probably would have had a heart attack or a total nervous breakdown, but I just came to a point where I didn't want to do anything. I just sat in my office and looked at the stack of letters from people who were asking me for advice and counseling—and I just couldn't be responsible anymore. I needed advice and counseling, and the one person I could have talked to, Teddy, was gone. I said, "No more," and I would just sit in my office all day. I said, "I'm not going to do anything else, ever." It scared me to death. Bob was scared to death, too.

PLAYBOY: Did you consider seeing a psychiatrist?

BRYANT: No, it was so painful—it was like I felt I'd be committing a sin by going to a psychiatrist; can you imagine that? I thought it would be denying Jesus. And I knew that a lot of psychiatrists tell you things totally contrary to Biblical teaching, such as in order to get along with your husband, go out and have an affair, or something like that. But friends of ours told us about this Christian retreat in Rosemead, California—it's sort of a Christian counseling center, quite famous. Marabel Morgan and lots of famous Christian people have gone there. So I decided I had to do something, that God was sending me out there. The night before I went, I told Bob, "I don't think I'm ever coming back." I really thought that—I was so scared and weary. We arrived at night and I met the psychologist and I liked him very much. I was told to come back the next morning and to plan on staying for at least two weeks. When we got to the hotel, I just could not sleep. I didn't want to wake Bob, so I went into this tiny bathroom and closed the door and got down on my hands and knees and just started praying. Something from way down deep inside of me was trying to come out. It was, so strange. I took a legal pad and a pencil and I started writing down these things that were bugging me. I filled 17 whole pages.

PLAYBOY: What did you write?

BRYANT: Some things I wouldn't want printed because it does no good to bring them up, but…well, the hatred of my father and the resentment toward Bob, things that went way back into my childhood and other more recent things, such as little difficulties I was having with the kids that I'd kept pent up. And the fact that I'd had all the responsibility pushed upon me for so many years—I had had responsibilities thrust on me no 12-year-old should have had, and they were still weighing on me. Anyway, I felt like a different person when I walked into the psychologist's office the next day and showed him the 17 pages. He said, "It looks like my work has already been done for me." God had been taking me in different stages, but I was holding out on Him without even knowing it, and now I was saying, OK, God, I'll give You my emotions, too. I still felt very ashamed that I'd even had to go to Rosemead—I just felt so guilty because of bad teachings about psychology and I didn't want anyone to know I'd even gone.

PLAYBOY: Was it that hard to admit?

BRYANT: It hurt me to admit that I was that human, yes. It took me 34 years to be able to admit that.

PLAYBOY: Has your marriage improved since Rosemead?

BRYANT: I never realized before then how I dominated Bob, but, fortunately, he was stronger than I and we were able to work these things out. The main problem we had in our marriage was that, because of my father, I basically had a hate for men. I mean, there were times when I literally hated my husband—I couldn't help it. But I was responsible because I allowed it to fester and didn't take it to the Lord. And divorce wasn't in my vocabulary, because I'd suffered the scars of divorce as a child and I knew what my children would suffer from it. But, above all, I knew it was against God's word. Bob and I still have our ups and downs, because I'm not a goody two-shoes. I know now I'm a human being, just like anybody else. If it weren't for Jesus Christ in my heart and life, I probably would have married several times. I probably would have slept around with guys and whatever. I always say that I'm just a sinner saved by grace.

PLAYBOY: What are your sins?

BRYANT: Oh, I don't know…maybe the sin of intolerance. [Laughs]

PLAYBOY: That's exactly what those you call militant homosexuals say about you.

BRYANT: I just meant it as a pun.

PLAYBOY: A pun? What pun?

BRYANT: I try not to be intolerant. All I'm saying is I don't have anything to brag about. The reason I can relate to the homosexual is because I've had emotional scars in my own life. I really felt the rejection of my father, and that is one of the things that maybe lead someone going into homosexuality. Look, I don't hate homosexuals—that's the truth, no matter what they think of my motives. I've always said I love the sinner but I hate the sin.

PLAYBOY: You've been saying that America and her children are being destroyed. You've compared America to Sodom and Gomorrah; you say God destroys the kind of nation that America has become.

BRYANT: Absolutely. I believe that's what has been happening to America.

PLAYBOY: Do you think it still is?

BRYANT: I believe now that we have a greater hope than ever before—that God is allowing America one last space to repent. If the parents of American children had stood by God's word, had they not had their head in the sand for so many years, the destruction of America's moral fiber wouldn't have happened. But it happened so fast no one knew it was happening. But now it seems people have a hunger. They've seen how so-called humanism works. They were told, "Well, one way to change the world is to educate the people. You educate them to a certain point, they're going to change." Well, has that been true? Has that happened? No. Our country was strong for so long because we claimed we were one nation under God and God blessed us. I believe that right now, God has removed himself from America. If we'll look through history, we're in the same situation as were Greece and Rome, when homosexuality and other sins were so rampant they became the norm.

UP *in* SMOKE

Playing a stoner sent these actors' careers sky-high

BY **STEPHEN REBELLO**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ORION/KOBAL/SHUTTERSTOCK**

Join us as we revisit some of the most memorable movie stints from influential actors pretending to be under the influence.

Jack Nicholson in *Easy Rider:* a boozy ACLU lawyer and perpetual screwup who hits the road with motorcycling hippie freaks Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper. Drugs of choice: Jim Beam and, later, grass, which was actually toked on camera. *Why the buzz:* Nicholson gave a career-making performance in this 1969 counterculture smash. *Downer:* He didn't win the best supporting actor Oscar that year.

Peter Fonda and Jack Nicholson on the roll in *Easy Rider*. Columbia/Kobal/Shutterstock)

Sean Penn in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High:* high school surfer dude and moron supreme Jeff Spicoli. Drugs of choice: buds, ludes. *Why the buzz:* Whether facing off with uptight history teacher Mr. Hand or nonchalantly ordering pizza during class, Penn makes Spicoli an icon by hitting every situation and line way out of the park. *Downer:* We'll pay good money to anyone who can find Penn's sense of humor today.

Sean Penn (center) plays stoner Jeff Spicoli—he puts the *high* in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*. Universal/ Kobal/Shutterstock

George Carlin, Alex Winter and Keanu Reeves in the first *Bill and Ted's* film. (Orion/Kobal/Shutterstock)

Keanu Reeves in *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure:* the likably lunkheaded high school senior and heavy-metal band member who time-trips through ancient history along with his best bud to ace an exam. *Drug of choice:* Ted's most excellent obliviousness. *Why the buzz:* Reeves has never been funnier, especially when displaying his iffy grasp of history. *Downer:* A sequel and animated TV version ran this franchise into the ground.

Dave Chappelle in *Half-Baked:* hilarious double duty as Thurgood Jensen, a janitor at a drug lab, and pothead rapper and pimp daddy Sir Smoke-a-Lot. *Drug of choice:* Weed. Duh. Why the buzz: Whether trying to con his squeaky-clean girlfriend Mary Jane (get it?) or confessing that pot has made him impotent, Chappelle is hilarious. *Downer:* Where's Dave now when we need him?

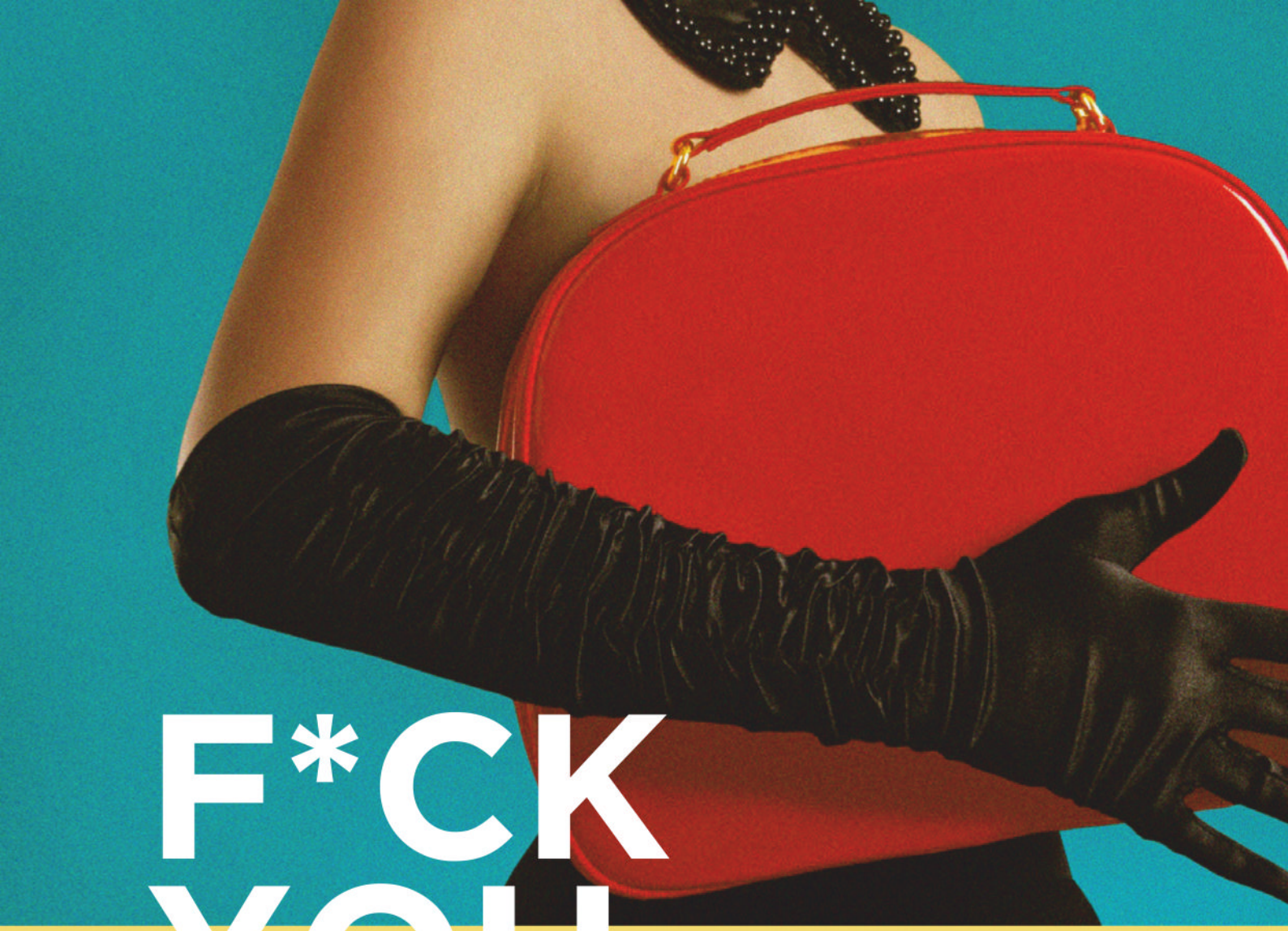
The character played by Dave Chapelle (center) is fully relatable in *Half-Baked*. (Michael Gibson/Universal/Kobal/Shutterstock)

Matthew McConaughey in *Dazed and Confused:* a swaggering, muscle-car-driving sex machine too cool (and too old) for the high school crowd he hangs with. *Drugs of choice:* grass, beer. *Why the buzz:* McConaughey supplies so many of the yuks and so much of the pathos in this soulfully hilarious classic that it's no wonder the performance made his career. *Downer:* McConaughey hasn't scored this great a role since.

All right, all right, all right: Matthew McConaughey in *Dazed and Confused*. (Universal/Gramercy/Kobal/Shutterstock)

Mike Myers in *Wayne's World:* the headbanging nimrod who broadcasts his own public-access TV show from his parents' basement with loser friend Garth (Dana Carvey). *Drug of choice:* Unspecified, but it's all in the subtext. *Why the buzz:* Myers and Carvey parlayed their Saturday Night Live chemistry into big-screen success, becoming 1990s grunge icons. *Downer:* The lame Wayne's World 2 is not worthy.

Party on, excellent! Mike Myers and Dana Carvey in *Wayne's World*. (Paramount/Kobal/Shutterstock)



F*CK YOU, PAY ME

Playboy talks to several financial dommes on the challenges and triumphs of draining bank accounts for a living

BY **JADE GOMEZ** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **GRACHIKOVA LARISA**

It's not exactly news that porn viewership has surged in the pandemic. When a country is gripped by uncertainty and isolation, the simple pleasure of jerking off can seem like all that's left. When you couple that with soaring unemployment and a nosedive in disposable income, of course people will look to sustain their sexual desires on a small budget—a.k.a. the free porn from tube sites or affordable subscriptions to OnlyFans pages. But what happens if blowing your budget is your kink?

Goddess Alexis's days don't usually start until lunchtime and end at three in the morning. Before her bedtime, a submissive contacted her to meet up. He arrived in a Tesla sporting a ski mask and handed off $500 in cash. A few hours later, he returned with another $500. The Los Angeles–based financial dominatrix recounts this as a normal day; sometimes she wakes up to hundreds of dollars in tributes across her various payment methods. She also has a video on her Twitter page of a man crawling on all fours, kissing and licking her shoes, with over 11,000 views. At one point, she kicks him in the face.

In another video that went viral, Southern financial dominatrix Mistress Marley is seen walking an older white man on a leash during North Carolina Central University's homecoming event. The video, captioned with "she brought her sugar daddy to homecoming" and laugh emojis, has over 3 million views. Marley was quick to refute that characterization. "That's not my sugar daddy, it's my sub lol he pays for me to control him," she replied—not expecting the onslaught of praise from hundreds of people. This interaction, like all the others mentioned in this piece, is consensual.

The sex industry is easy enough to enter, and the increased popularity of OnlyFans in the past year has made even the most inexperienced person a bona fide adult star with nothing but a smartphone. Although still relatively obscure, financial domination being seen as an easy payday has led to an influx of newcomers diving headfirst into an industry that is far more complicated.

Goddess Jaim, a 21-year-old full-time financial dominatrix, was struggling to make ends meet. In addition to going to school full-time for forensic science, Jaim worked nights as an Uber driver from 7 p.m. to 2 a.m. After Uber updated its policy for how old a driver's car can be, she was left without a job. "I literally searched online for 'ways to make money'," Jaim says with a giggle. "And then I came across findom."

After a failed stint as a sugar baby, financial domination seemed much more aligned with Jaim's personality. She initially started as a catfish dominatrix, a subset of the fetish that is not as profitable but less of a privacy concern. Catfish dominatrixes create social media profiles posing as celebrities like Gigi Hadid or Kylie Jenner, or use photos of Instagram models while making it clear that they are not who they appear to be. The thrill of being scammed, as well as no expectation of loyalty beyond a transaction, makes it appealing for submissives of the fetish, but Jaim was dissatisfied.

Within a few weeks, she had scrubbed her catfish persona in favor of her actual photos. Within four months, Jaim was netting between $2,500 and $5,000 a month.

It hasn't always been this easy to find communities and resources to get into this specific subset of domination. For Taylor Knight, it just fell into her lap.

At 18, Knight took an acting gig as a "decoy" on Maury. The premise was simple: When couples with a cheating boyfriend or husband would attend the show, Knight would be placed with them to see if they'd flirt with her. Most did, and the footage would be played back for the audience and their displeased girlfriends. Due to her self-described "bratty" attitude, Knight began receiving fan mail at the studio, ranging from flowers and gifts to hundreds of dollars in cash.

This was the early 2000s, and paid subscription sites for solo performers were more common. Knight capitalized on that. Using a monthly subscription model that allowed access to her wish list, payment information and a weekly cam show, she found herself making thousands without ever getting naked. "I even had homework slaves on there, so I never had to do homework for school,"

"It started to do well very quickly. By the third or fourth month I was making $12,000 a month."

Knight recalls. "It started to do well very quickly. By the third or fourth month I was making $12,000 a month."

Nearly 15 years later, Knight easily makes over six figures through the dedicated fanbase she curated almost entirely by accident.

For dommes like Goddess Alexis, findom was a way to navigate sex work in a much more comfortable way. After getting into sex work through a premium Snapchat and OnlyFans in late 2019 as a way to earn extra money to attend a rave, she recognized the underlying nature of the interactions with her primarily male clientele.

"I realized I do identify as queer, and I'm mostly attracted to women," she

says. “I had a problem being mean to men because I wanted them to give me the money, and I’d give them the content. I wanted it to be transactional.”

After this discovery, Alexis’ findom career has become mutually pleasurable for both her and her subs. She considers herself a safe space for her subs to explore their kinks, no matter how extreme. Typical sessions include cosplaying as a character on Skype, blackmail sessions in which subs provide their own embarrassing photos or information and even in-person meet-ups that involve public humiliation.

Despite her conservative Southern upbringing—her parents kicked her out at age 18 when she refused to stop dating girls—Alexis vowed to keep an open and sympathetic mind toward her subs, even if she engages in consensual torture. “I am very big on believing that people are good and wanting to think that everyone deserves love and acceptance because that's what I want in return,” she explains. “I’m open to giving a sub a safe space to try those kinks out. I think that's a cool thing that helps them come back.”

"I even had homework slaves on there, so I never had to do homework for school."

Despite Covid-19 leaving many people uncertain about their financial futures, Alexis has been able to earn as much as $15,000 in a single month from OnlyFans subscriptions, initial tributes, cash meets and virtual drain sessions. With this success comes the privilege to take a step back from work, which Alexis did after the tragic killing of George Floyd.

The Black Lives Matter movement has pushed for people to support Black-owned businesses and other projects, and it has carried over into the sex industry. Black sex workers have always been the most vulnerable demographic in the scene, because the criminalization of sex work goes hand in hand with the over-policing of Black people and their communities.

As Prostitution in New York City: Answers to Some Questions, a research paper published in 1977 by New York Women in Criminal Justice, notes: “There is little hard information on the ethnicity, birthplace or income of New York City prostitutes. Data from police records, although useful, describe only those women who have been arrested; these are disproportionately non-white. Racial and economic discrimination enter into the prostitution picture: White women are more likely to become call girls, and they are less likely to work the heavily policed Times Square area.”

The inherent racism built into work environments extends into the sex industry even more, as Black and Brown women are both hypersexualized and penalized for their sexuality. It’s why aesthetics associated with Black women, such as elaborate nails, hair and jewelry, are commodified as mainstream fashion on non-Black women but Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion were shamed for the lyrical content and music video of their recent song “WAP.”

For 33-year-old King Kourt, being a Black domme was at first disheartening. “You look at people I started with at the same time, and it seemed like they were making money very fast compared to me,” she notes. For Kourt, findom is a side hustle that she engages in apart from her full-time job in the medical field. She calls it “black female supremacy” as a means of taking ownership of her sexuality.

“I’m a plus-size black woman,” Kourt says. “Of course, I’m probably fetishized. The fact that I put a price tag on it felt right for me.”

With the help of Black Domme Sorority, a support system founded by Mistress Marley, Kourt found a tight-knit group of fellow Black women navigating a primarily white industry. Much like other domme groups, members promote each other’s content, vent their frustrations and receive mentorship from more experienced dommes. In an industry that anyone can join in a few simple clicks, that intimate mentorship can provide a world of a difference, especially with the shared experience of marginalization.

Mistress Marley isn’t the only one who holds classes for dommes. There is an entire market for this sort of education. Experienced dommes such as Knight and Prague-based Lucky DeVille capitalize on this through virtual classes, e-books and personal mentoring as a way to guide newer talent through the ins and outs of growing a brand. DeVille’s website, FinDom101, explores not only the growth of a personal brand, but also the ethics that come with engaging in such a grey area of kink.

SESTA/FOSTA, two bills signed into law by President Donald Trump in 2018, were supposedly designed to fight online sex trafficking. What they actually do is persecute sex workers and make them less safe. The bills allow internet platforms on which sexual activity is discussed to be heavily censored and, in some cases, held liable even if illegal activity does not occur. Combined with other anti–sex work rules and regulations put in place both online and in real life, something as simple as receiving payments from online processors can be frozen if it’s suspected to be related to sexual content and activity.

Dommes such as Alexis and Knight take extra precautions with lawyers to ensure they are protected, whether it’s by creating contracts with subs or making sure certain activities and transactions aren’t legal risks. In particular, blackmail kink can be dangerous for many dommes, as subs can later sue for something they initially requested. As a result, many dommes will not engage in it.

Although there are countless resources for

"They will drain their whole bank account for you if you let them. Personally, I couldn't do that with a clear conscience because I'd be ruining their lives."

dommes, there are not nearly as many for submissives. RJ runs the Findom Club, a resource for both dommes and subs who want to get started in the fetish. RJ has been in the scene longer than most, having stumbled upon findom by chance in an AOL chat room in the 1990s. After engaging in an argument with a young man, RJ received threats from the man saying he knew where RJ lived and would hurt him unless he mailed him his printer and other valuables. RJ found himself at the post office sending everything from his printer to his CD player. The threats were empty, but RJ found a fetish he has now been engaged in for over 25 years.

On the Findom Club website, RJ has compiled his decades of experience, making sure to advocate for subs' mental health and safety. "Part of the challenge is there are people with some serious mental health issues that are victims of their fetish," he says as he scrolls through an exhaustive survey used to gather information on the community. In the Controlling/Quitting section of his website, there is a chart for subs to use to evaluate their dependence on the fetish. It emphasizes balancing real-life friendships with the kink, setting budgets and taking breaks. Sometimes, however, that responsibility is not recognized by the submissive.

"So many subs will take out loans for you. They will drain their whole bank account for you if you let them," Jaim warns. "Personally, I couldn't do that with a clear conscience because I'd be ruining their lives." Most dommes are of a similar mindset, emphasizing the personal responsibility to keep subs' mental and financial health in check so subs can come back for more.

Kourt recalls a fantasy in which a sub wanted her to lock him up in chastity belt and throw away the key. "That's hot, but in reality I'll put the key in my back pocket," she says with a laugh.

Claudia Fijal

Photography by **Joshua Paull | @jpaullphoto**

Model **@claudiafijal**

Such an absolute honour to have you on Playboy: Can you give us a bit of a background on your career as a model and where it all started? Thank you, it's such an honor to be here. My modeling career started when I was just a teenager with a dream and a lot of determination. I grew up fascinated by the art of transformation, how makeup, styling, and presence could create a whole new world. Over the years, I've been lucky to work with incredible brands and photographers who helped me evolve from being in front of the camera to truly understanding the storytelling behind it. Modeling became my passport into self-expression, and it's what ultimately led me to create my own beauty brand, Saint by Claudia.

What's a project or goal you're currently working on that you're really excited about? Right now, I'm completely immersed in expanding Saint by Claudia. I want to redefine what luxury beauty means. It's not just about looking good; it's about feeling divine, seen, and empowered. I'm also working on more creative direction behind the brand's campaigns. I love having my hands on every detail, from the visuals to the messaging. My other absolute favorite project on the planet is creating music with my husband, LUCRE (@followlucre). He is a techno producer that's exploding on the music scene, and we have created a ton of incredible tracks together, and have many more to come.

What is at the top of your list to achieve the most in 2025? Balance and expansion, both personally and professionally. I want Saint by Claudia to become a household name, but I also want to continue evolving as a creator and woman. My goal is to collaborate with more legacy luxury brands and step further into entrepreneurship. I'm passionate about building something that lasts.

What does it mean for you to be seen as a strong, intelligent, ambitious woman? It means everything. For a long time, women were told they could be beautiful or smart, soft or powerful. I've always rejected that idea. I believe you can walk into a room to close million-dollar deals and still have empathy and grace. Strength isn't about being untouchable; it's about being rooted in who you are.

What would you say makes you stand out in the industry? Authenticity. I've been in this industry for over two decades, and what keeps people's attention is the truth. I don't chase trends, I set them based on what feels genuine to me. My audience knows I only share what I truly believe in, and that's what builds connection.

What are some of your biggest passions? Beauty, obviously. It's my love language. But also wellness, psychology, and storytelling. I'm deeply passionate about self-awareness and helping women reconnect with their worth. Everything I create, from content to products, is meant to inspire that feeling of you are enough, and you can still want more.

If you weren't in the entertainment world, what career would you love to explore? Definitely something still in the business world. I'm fascinated with building a brand from scratch, and I think we live in a society where it's easier than ever with the power of our cell phones.

Three ultimate deal breakers when it comes to men? Lack of ambition, lack of communication, and arrogance. I'm drawn to men who are emotionally intelligent and self-aware. You can be powerful and still be kind; that's real masculinity.

We are taking you out on your ultimate date, and we really want to knock this one out of the ballpark. What would that entail? Something simple but intentional. A rooftop dinner overlooking the city, great food, deep conversation, and energy that feels easy. I don't need a production; I value presence. If he makes me laugh and keeps me mentally stimulated, I'm all in.

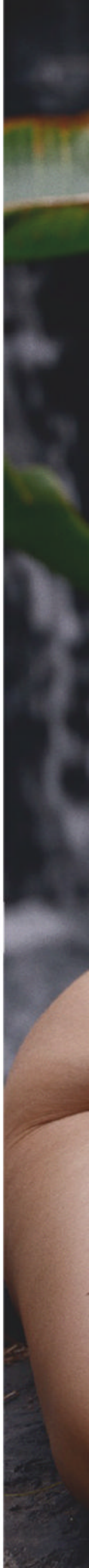
What are some of the things that attract you to a man? Confidence without ego. I love a man who's driven, grounded, and secure in himself. Someone who celebrates my strength instead of feeling threatened by it. Bonus points if he has taste and knows how to carry himself; style is definitely foreplay.

You have one last chance to do something you've always wanted to do, with no limits on anything. What are you doing? I'd host a global women's retreat in the Maldives, equal parts empowerment, luxury, and connection. I'd want to create a space where women can heal, transform, and step fully into their divine power. Oh, and maybe fly there on my own private jet while I'm at it, go big or go home, right?.

That said, what advice would you give to all the women out there when it comes to love and relationships? Never abandon yourself for love. If you have to shrink to be loved, it's not love, it's control. The right person will make you feel more you, not less. Prioritize your peace, keep your standards high, and remember: you teach people how to love you by how you love yourself.

Where can our readers catch up with you and stay updated with your work? You can find me on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. I'm always sharing beauty tips, behind-the-scenes moments, and updates from Saint by Claudia. My handles on all those platforms is @claudiafijal. And of course, I encourage you to check out @saintbyclaudia for all your beauty needs.

We are so happy to have gotten to know you a little bit! Any last words out there for our readers? Thank you for having me. My message to everyone reading: don't wait for permission to reinvent yourself. You can be soft and fierce, feminine and fearless, that's real power. Own it.



Playboy Interview

Erica Jong

A candid conversation with the feminist author of the erotic novel "Fear of Flying"

INTERVIEW BY **GRETCHEN MCNEESE** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CHARLES W. BUSH**

Less than two years ago, she was known principally as a poet—one with a fondness for ampersands and startling metaphor ("& the hole in the penis/sings to the cunt") and sassy swipes at male chauvinism ("Beware of the man who praises liberated women; he is planning to quit his job"). Her poetry sold well—for poetry. Then, late in 1973, came publication of her first novel, Fear of Flying, a bawdily adulterous romp across Europe by a young woman frantically searching for sexual and emotional fulfillment, which was greeted by a chorus of rave reviews (and a gaggle of horrified ones, from critics who were turned off by the book's no-holes-barred imagery or threatened by its feminist implications). Novelist John Updike was perhaps most accurate in his prediction: "Fear of Flying," he wrote in The New Yorker, "feels like a winner." It was. Last November, Fear of Flying was issued in paperback—and immediately took off like one of the jumbo jets that so terrorized its antiheroine, Isadora Wing. At last count, the Signet softcover was in its 28th printing with more than 3,500,000 copies off the presses, had been oscillating between the number-one and number-two spots on best-seller lists for months and was the topic of heated debates at cocktail parties, consciousness-raising groups, college classrooms—and in locker rooms—throughout the country.

All of which took its author, 33-year-old Erica Jong (the J is pronounced as in John), totally by surprise. She had never expected to see the book published. (One printer, in fact, had refused to set the manuscript in type because of its considerable four-letter-word content.) Suddenly, she found herself alternately consulted as a sexual guru, solicited as a potential bedmate, sought after as a guest speaker, hailed as the most visible star in that new galaxy of liberated women writers described by Newsweek as "map makers of the new female consciousness" and, in effect, banned by the Smithsonian Institution. (Actually, it was Jong who, charging censorship, canceled a planned talk at the Smithsonian, after being advised she should avoid discussing sex and politics. It later turned out that Smithsonian secretary S. Dillon Ripley had already directed that her scheduled appearance be quashed.)

Since becoming a public personality, Jong herself has been the subject of conflicting reports: She was in a deep depression; she was bubbling with happiness. Her marriage was on the rocks; it was stronger than ever. She was writing; she wasn't. When the dust began to clear this past spring, the public learned that Erica Jong was alive and well and living in Malibu; that she and her psychiatrist husband were divorcing; that producer Julia Phillips and Columbia Pictures were planning a film version of Fear of Flying and that she had two books (Loveroot, a volume of new poems, and Here Comes and Other Poems, a collection of previously published Jong poems and essays, plus a literary-magazine interview) coming out in June. Loveroot, in fact, is a Book-of-the-Month Club alternate selection this month.

Jong is the first to admit that had it not been for her novel, her poetry wouldn't be on any book-club lists. The overwhelming success of Fear of Flying cannot, of course, be traced entirely to the book's raunchiness. One reviewer, intrigued by the F.O.F. sales phenomenon, got the names of the book's female borrowers from local libraries and queried them about its appeal. They answered, in the main, that it was a book they could relate to—often that Isadora Wing was expressing thoughts and feelings they had previously believed were theirs alone. Surprisingly enough, many male readers agreed. As Christopher Lehmann-Haupt of The New York Times wrote: "I can't remember ever before feeling quite so free to identify my own feelings with those of a female protagonist—which would suggest that Isadora Wing, with her unfettered yearnings for sexual satisfaction and her touching struggle for identity and self-confidence, is really more of a person than a woman."

There were minority opinions, some expressed stridently. Novelist Bill Brashler called it "a thoroughly obnoxious book. I read about 60 pages and then threw it against the wall." Militant feminists have damned Isadora for the fact that despite all her struggles toward self-assertion, she still depends on men to give her self-assurance. They call the ending of the book—when a confused Isadora returns, albeit rather tentatively, to her husband—a cop-out. Its author has an answer for that one; the book was intended, she says, to be "a saga of unfulfillment." To find out what all the fuss is about, PLAYBOY sent Senior Editor Gretchen McNeese to California to determine whether Jong is really, as she herself once worried aloud, the "matron saint of adulteresses" or whether she is, as her pen-and-pun pal Louis Untermeyer, the poet, claims, "just a nice Jewish girl." McNeese's report:

"When I arrived in California, I found my subject in a dither. The concrete floor of the Malibu beach house in which she lives with writer Jonathan Fast was at the moment being jack-hammered into shards, the better to afford access to an odoriferously leaking sewage-disposal pipe underneath. Writer Henry Miller, with whom Erica shares a sort of mutual-admiration society, had taken her and Jon into his home in nearby Pacific Palisades to await plumbing repairs.

"Despite it all, Erica welcomed me graciously when I called at Miller's to pick her up. Everybody describes her as plump; I thought her round-faced but shapely. Her nearsighted, blue eyes are partly hidden by enormous, pink-tinted glasses that she pushes up into her thick shock of tawny-blonde hair when she's having her picture taken. I found her soft-spoken and articulate; she talks with vitality, in well-constructed paragraphs scarcely interrupted by the y' knows and uhs that clutter most people's speech.

"Our first session took place in my motel room, but by the following day, the beach house was sufficiently restored for us to meet there. It sits high on a bluff overlooking the Pacific and one wall is a wide expanse of glass; the effect is something like that of being in the wheelhouse of an enormous ocean-going vessel, setting sail for the Orient. In the living area, there's a jungle of philodendrons, rubber plants and other vegetation, illuminated by skylights. To one side is a kitchenette in which Erica brewed pot after pot of coffee to fuel our conversation. On the counter, awaiting a quick pickup game, lay a Frisbee. On the other side of the house is the bedroom, dominated by a king-sized water bed; outdoors, there is a small Jacuzzi bath.

"As we talked, we could hear the rapid tattoo of Jon's typewriter; he was completing a draft of his first novel. (He recently sold a story for a made-for-TV movie, Everybody's Watching, to—coincidentally—Playboy Productions.) Occasionally, he'd take a break, joining us for a joke or a sandwich or serenading us with a few strums on his banjo.

"Erica seems to attract devoted, not to say fiercely loyal, friends. One such, writer Alice Bach—whose stories for 'young adults' are as different from Fear of Flying as is Little Women—was asked by a women's magazine (which she declines to identify) to do an exposé on Jong. She refused, reporting that there was nothing to expose. Another New York friend, Grace Darling—Foreign Affairs advertising director and the person who first brought Erica's work to the attention of publisher Holt, Rinehart & Winston—observes: 'We all miss her terribly. It's as if the light went out when she left New York. But then, everyone who meets Erica loves her.'

"Which may well be true. It's certainly true that everyone who hasn't met Erica but has read Fear of Flying wonders about the odd coincidences, if, indeed, they are coincidences, between the author and her novel's principal character, Isadora Wing. Both grew up in artistic, relatively affluent Manhattan families. Both are Phi Beta Kappa graduates of Barnard who went on, almost, to earn doctorates in literature at Columbia. Both are blonde poets; they write, in fact, the same poetry. Both have been married twice: first to a college sweetheart who had a nervous breakdown, then to a Chinese-American child psychiatrist with a monosyllabic surname. Just how autobiographical is Fear of Flying? I decided I'd ask."

PLAYBOY: This is the question everybody's asking, so let's get it over with: How much of Fear of Flying's Isadora Wing is really Erica Jong?
JONG: You mean will the real Isadora Wing stand up? Or lie down—preferably on the analyst's couch? Sure, there's a lot of me in Isadora, but a lot of characters and events in the book are totally invented. I didn't set out to write autobiography; I set out to write a satirical novel about a woman in search of her own identity, and I did not stick to facts very closely—frequently not at all. There never was an actual odyssey across Europe, for example.
PLAYBOY: Isadora's Chinese-American psychiatrist husband, Bennett Wing, seems to have been modeled on your own husband.
JONG: You said it, I didn't.
PLAYBOY: But was there really an English analyst like the one with whom Isadora ran off?
JONG: Hmmmm. Well, there are any number of impotent Englishmen to choose from. The one I chose was lucky—though I don't suppose you could call him a lucky stiff. At any rate, I doubt that this character would recognize himself.
PLAYBOY: Are the people who did recognize themselves in your book still speaking to you?
JONG: More than ever. People love any kind of immortality, from scratching their names on a wall to being depicted in a novel, even satirically. The friends who have been most incensed with me are those who

can't hallucinate themselves into the book at all. They've complained, "Didn't I make any impression? I wasn't in that book!" I've heard many guesses at each character in Fear of Flying, and most of them were completely wrong. They were people I'd never even met or heard of. So I'm constantly explaining to people that what I write is an admixture of reality and fantasy, and that I mix it up as I please—to elevate it to myth, hopefully. Sometimes when I finish writing, I can't even remember what actually happened and what didn't. But I guess there are people who can't make the distinction between writing and life or between autobiography and myth.

PLAYBOY: We've heard that you've been annoyed with people who can't make that distinction—who expect the real Erica to be an easy lay because the fictional Isadora is so openly sexual. Is that true?

JONG: Oh, yes; I found that very unnerving at first, having men sort of sidle up to me and proposition me, thinking that because I put myself on paper in a certain kind of way, I'm available to anybody who asks. I remember one night before I went to the American Booksellers Convention, I asked Anne Sexton, who was a good friend, "What do I do when men come up to me on the convention floor and say, g'Hey, baby, I want a zipless fuck'?" And Anne said, "Thank them. Thank them and say, 'Zip up your fuck until I ask for it.'"

PLAYBOY: The zipless fuck—a quickie with a total stranger, without even having to unzip—is Isadora's most notorious fantasy. Is it one you share?

JONG: I don't happen to be in search of ziplessness at this point in my life. I certainly had those fantasies, when I was 23 or 24 years old, of wanting anonymous sex. Or thinking I wanted it. But, of course, whenever it was offered to me, or when I would wake up in bed with somebody who was unspeakably idiotic, I would think, who needs it? Probably the zipless fuck is better as a fantasy than as a reality.

PLAYBOY: Fantasy or reality, the zipless fuck is a phrase you're likely to be stuck with the rest of your life.

JONG: Well, zippers are always getting stuck.

PLAYBOY: There's even a zipper on the cover of Fear of Flying's paperback edition. And a navel, which is also on the cover of your first book of poetry, Fruits & Vegetables. Do you have a belly-button fixation?

JONG: Do you think the publishers think of me as a navelist rather than a novelist? You should have seen the original design for the softcover edition of Fear of Flying. It showed a Happy Hooker–type lady sitting in the crack formed by the parted zipper, wearing a flimsy sort of Erskine Caldwell blouse and sucking her finger. She looked like a very tacky version of the Cosmopolitan girl, actually. The cover that was used seemed tasteful by comparison.

PLAYBOY: But that kind of cover sells books. So does sex inside. What do you say to people who accuse you of having put sex into your novel just to sensationalize it, to boost sales?

JONG: That's the kind of easy, top-of-the-head response I get from not very thoughtful people. It is not the response that I get from my mail. What I get from readers very often is, "Why did they put this sexy, lurid cover on your book? Why is your book sold as a sex book? Your book is really about identity, about a woman finding herself. The sex is incidental; the sex is part of identity."

When I was writing Fear of Flying, I didn't think it would ever be published. To me, the important thing about this book was that it be honest about everything—about being Jewish in Germany, about wetting your pants when you get sexually excited, about all areas of life. That's the theme that runs all through my work, and sex is just one tiny part of that. It isn't all of life, but it is a part of life, and I always find it astounding when people concentrate only on the sex in my work.

PLAYBOY: But it has been promoted as sexy, hasn't it?

JONG: Oh, the logistics of mass-market publishing are such that a paperback publisher, like a movie company, needs a handle to advertise something by. New American Library saw my book as the first breakthrough novel about female sexual fantasies. Publishing is a faddish business; and after Nancy Friday's book My Secret Garden, sexual fantasies were, excuse the expression, hot. So that's the handle N.A.L. used for its sales force. After all, every product needs a handle in our consumer culture. I mean, nobody says PLAYBOY is the magazine that publishes John Cheever or John Updike, though I know that every time I turn to PLAYBOY, I can find a new short story I'll want to read. PLAYBOY is known as the magazine with the nude centerfold.

PLAYBOY: How do you feel about the nude centerfold? Some outspoken liberationists have complained that it exploits women.

JONG: No, I don't think they're being exploited, but they're not really women to me, they're almost figments of the imagination, sort of the apotheosis of the male mammary dream. I think they have a kind of fantasy value.

"In one sense, the men who fear women's liberation are right. The women's movement is going to take something away from them—the right to be masters in a master-slave relationship."

PLAYBOY: Could you fantasize being one?

JONG: Never—but then, I've always found my distinction in another area. If all I had to recommend me was the decorative value of my body, perhaps I would want that form of recognition. But I must say, I'm glad I don't have to get what I get in the world through my looks, because that's such an ephemeral kind of success, the kind that makes you fear your 30th birthday. But about the centerfold, I have no real objections to it. I recently learned, by reading between the lines of your Mel Brooks interview, that men all over America jerk off into it, and now that I know this, I think it serves a useful social function. "Redeeming social value," as they say.

PLAYBOY: We don't have any research to substantiate that finding, so we'll change the subject. There seems to be little doubt that the ways men and women deal with each other are changing. What do you see as the most important changes in relations between the sexes?

JONG: Is that like asking, "What relations between men and women would I take to a desert island?"? I do see certain definite trends: One of them is that women are becoming increasingly independent economically. So they are in a position to choose men not out of desperate need for a social rudder or an economic supporter but out of their own desire for companionship, for friendship, for love, for sex. That time has come for only a fraction of women, self-supporting professional women. It has come for me. But when it comes for most women, we'll see great changes, because women will not put up with the stuff they've put up with for centuries.

PLAYBOY: What kind of stuff?

JONG: Being nursemaids to their men; taking what is dished out to them; being chief cook and bottle washer, baby sitter, nanny; entertaining the husband's guests, the whole servant-master relationship.

PLAYBOY: What about those women who are content with that conventional husband-is-boss relationship? Would you criticize them for that?

JONG: No, but I would hazard a guess from the mail I've gotten that many women who are in that kind of situation don't want to be, that they

are chafing in it. And, in that sense, the men who fear women's liberation are right. The women's movement is going to take something away from them—the right to be masters in a master-slave relationship. If you can conceive of relations between people only in that way, certainly you would much rather be the master than the slave. It's very tempting for me, too, at times. I mean, there have been times in my life when I've thought, God, wouldn't it be great to have a man at home who would be faithful, be there all the time, and I could run around and do what I wanted and still come back to this person?

PLAYBOY: Every woman should have a wife?

JONG: Yes. At times, I've fantasized about having the kind of relationship with a man that men have always had with women. But if you really stop and think about what that implies of your view of the other person, it's not so terrific. I frankly think that, for all the difficulties inherent in it, it's much better to have a relationship between two equals. So if men are losing some of their old prerogatives, I think they're gaining something better. But it's hard to convince them, sometimes.

PLAYBOY: Some psychologists speculate that many men are so threatened by these changes that they've become impotent. Have you run into many guys who can't get it up?

JONG: Isadora experiences that in the novel, but I haven't. I have had men say to me, "I'm afraid I would be impotent with you, because you are who you are." But it doesn't happen. In fact, one of the things that men often tell me is, "I'm so surprised that you're unthreatening. I'm so surprised that you're feminine. That you're warm. That you're funny. That you're cuddly." I don't know why they're surprised. I guess they make the assumption that a woman who is successful is going to be a ball breaker. It's not my fault that they have that crazy response. That's what the culture feeds them, that a successful woman must have become successful by being a ball breaker. This assumption does not exist about men. It's considered perfectly natural for a man to be businesslike, efficient, competent at what he does, without that going against his masculinity. But if a woman is good at what she does, and is strong-minded and determined, then it's assumed that in some way she must be unfeminine.

PLAYBOY: Have you, like Isadora, found yourself using your sexual wiles to get something you want out of a man?

JONG: I've never slept with an editor in order to get my work published or anything like that. But I've thought of it. And I'm sure I've done a lot of eyelash batting and handholding and kissing people on the cheek rather more warmly than I have meant it; everyone has. I was told, for example, that one woman author, when she was on a publicity tour, slept with all the book salesmen and that they'd never had it so good. I have no particular moral objections to that, but I would be incapable of doing it.

PLAYBOY: Germaine Greer, in her PLAYBOY Interview, says that any coercion of women for sexual purposes, even if it isn't violent, is rape. "If a man takes you out on a motorway and stops the car and says, 'Now you can walk or fuck,' and you fuck, then you've been raped," she claims.

JONG: She's right. I think women frequently feel they have to give sexual favors to get ahead. Women still have to take crumbs of power from men, so what do they do? A lot of things they wouldn't ordinarily do, and sometimes those things imply a kind of sexual submission—pleasing, Uncle Tomming, niggering it up, pretending to ideas they don't really hold. Maybe Germaine Greer would call that mental rape, and maybe she would be right. Example of mental rape: women who will not sign a political petition for fear that their husbands might not agree with it. There are such women. I was shocked to discover that there were.

PLAYBOY: Are you politically oriented yourself? We recall that Isadora refuses to pet with boys who like Ike.

JONG: I care about politics, but I don't do enough about it. As for Isadora and Ike, that was true in my own life, only with me it was Nixon. I made it Ike in the book because it sounded more euphonious. I remember once back around 1955, when a prep school boy took me out in his car, and we went up to a secluded street in Riverdale and started necking. Then he said something about how Nixon was his ideal and I said, "Take me home." I was completely turned off.

PLAYBOY: You rejected him, then. Gay Talese, who has been studying modern American sexual lifestyles for a proposed book, has stated that women don't fear rejection as men do. Do you agree?

JONG: I like Gay, but I disagree with that statement completely. Women are very afraid of rejection. I think what Gay means is he thinks a woman can always get laid, whereas a man can't. I was at a party once where he asserted: "Any woman in this room could go out onto any street corner and get laid in half an hour, whereas I don't believe any man in this room could." And the men in that room were all very attractive. But if what he said is true, so what? Who wants to get laid in just half an hour? And who wants it on the street?

Women are very afraid of rejection. The rejection of not getting the telephone call, not being asked out, is just as bad as the rejection of being turned down for sex. But, you know, men are afraid of loneliness, too. I've seen men who fall apart more after a divorce than women do; men who have absolutely gone bananas when they've been left. I don't see vast psychological differences between the sexes. I'm not saying there are no differences; I believe there are. But I think it would be much healthier for us all to stress the similarities.

PLAYBOY: What are some of the differences you do believe in?

JONG: Well, I think men are truly afraid of castration, in a way that is symbolic and also affects their daily lives. I believe women are stronger, more resilient emotionally and physically, partly because they are not coddled in the way that men are. They have to take care of everybody, and that makes for incredible toughness.

PLAYBOY: Another male fear, you claim in your novel, is that women are talking about them. You wrote: "Men have always detested women's gossip because they suspect the truth: Their measurements are being taken and compared." Is that really true?

JONG: My friends tend to be very explicit—at least with me. We talk endlessly about men in bed and their dimensions and how they fuck. I think if men ever heard the things we say to one another, they'd wilt.

PLAYBOY: Like what?

JONG: Oh, I've had long conversations with women friends about the anatomies and techniques of various lovers: What shape was his penis? How long did it take him to come? I know that women aren't supposed to talk like that, but to my knowledge, they do it much more than men. A lot of very sensitive men have complained to me, as a matter of fact, that they don't have as close relationships with their men friends as I do with my women friends.

PLAYBOY: Is that because of the old homosexuality bugaboo?

JONG: Buggery-boo, you should say. Yes, I think it is. I think it's also that they're very afraid of showing weakness in front of one another. Men construe intimacy as weakness. That's part of the sexist brainwashing our society subjects men to.

PLAYBOY: How about some of the other things our society lays on men? We hear a lot of talk that a woman should be free to choose between a career outside the home and a life as a housewife. Very few men have such a choice; they are expected to support at least themselves, if not a family.

JONG: I know lots of women who have absolutely no qualms about supporting a man, who do it and feel no conflict. I will tell you that I do not know very many men who can take it.

PLAYBOY: Why not?

JONG: It's not because women won't let them but because a man's identity in this culture depends so much on his profession, his monetary status, the plastic credit cards in his wallet, that most men cannot do without these props.

PLAYBOY: You've said that a great deal of your own identity comes from your professional accomplishments. If you had to identify yourself—introduce yourself to a stranger, say—without reference to your work, how would you do it?

JONG: That's really a very interesting question. Almost impossible, isn't it? Hmmm. I would probably say that I like to laugh a lot, that I'm a clown, which I tend to be; that I'm prone to put on weight; that I'm quite horny—

PLAYBOY: Does it surprise people when you admit to them that you're quite horny?

JONG: It surprises me to discover it about myself. I don't know if I'm hornier than other people, but I think I may be more in touch with my sexual feelings. My life seems kind of incomplete if there isn't a sort of sexuality in it. I don't mean random, promiscuous sexuality. I'm not interested in that. What I mean is that unless there is a person to whom I am attached, feel warmly toward and have good sex with, I feel that my life is really truncated. It's an important component in my life that I don't like having to do without.

PLAYBOY: Linda Lovelace prescribes daily orgasms for everybody. Otherwise, she says, people get very uptight. Do you buy that?

JONG: I don't know whether you have to have an orgasm every day, although it would be, certainly, very nice. I hate to quantify, because then people who read this are going to say, "Oh, my God, I didn't have one today!" Sort of like taking your vitamins. Or like those marriage manuals you used to see that said no orgasm is a good orgasm unless it's simultaneous with your partner's. That has fucked up more people than anything. That is the biggest, silliest myth. I mean, sometimes they are simultaneous, they just happen to be, and that's fine. But if you're thinking about it, it won't happen.

I do think one's feelings about orgasm are completely variable. Certainly there are times when, if you really love somebody, you can get totally into the idea of giving pleasure. This may sound like something that goes against all kinds of feminist beliefs, but a man can do it as well as a woman; I mean, there are times when you just want to give the other person pleasure. If it's consistently like that, then there's something wrong with the relationship. The fun in fucking is the variety.

PLAYBOY: Any particular variations you enjoy?

JONG: No, all kinds, I think. I like gentle sex, but I also like tough sex sometimes. I can get enormously turned on by being dominated in bed, although I would hate being raped. Sometimes I like to be the one who's active, absolutely driving the man wild, while he's relatively passive. Or you can both be equally active. I think it's nice to do it in all different positions, different ways, including hanging from the chandelier.

PLAYBOY: Have you ever tried it hanging from the chandelier?

JONG: No. And this house has no chandeliers. But I can heartily recommend sunken bathtubs, Jacuzzis, water beds.

PLAYBOY: Do you ever fuck outdoors?

JONG: A lifelong New Yorker? Fucking outdoors? Where? In Central Park?

PLAYBOY: Maybe you'll have more opportunity here in California. Speaking of fucking, what's your opinion of the diagnosis often made by men that all some women need is a good fuck?

JONG: A lot of men need a good fuck, but they're incapable of getting it because they regard their penises as sort of detached from the rest of their bodies. I think there are very few people who know how to get a good fuck, getting on that subject.

PLAYBOY: OK, how does one get a good fuck?

JONG: I think probably the essence of it is understanding that your body and your head are connected. The trouble with most people is that they're too focused on their genitals. I really think that's what makes some men bad lovers. There are certain men who will always grab for the clitoris, you know, massage it and then thrust home and that's it. And there are other men who—this is terrible—never take off their pajama tops while screwing. There are others who never take off their socks. There are others who never take off their glasses. Now, this bespeaks fragmentation. These men think sex is all in the genitals. There are other men who, immediately after having made you come, zing out, withdraw, roll over and go to sleep. For good sex, you should take time with it; treat it as something that's important, that you're not ashamed of, that is fun. Rolling around on the floor, licking apple butter off each other, if that's what you dig.

PLAYBOY: There's a lot of licking in your poems, isn't there?

JONG: Yes. Well, I'm a very oral person. I like licking a lot.

PLAYBOY: Licking or being licked?

JONG: Both. I also like barking.

PLAYBOY: Barking?

JONG: Arf! Arf! What I mean by barking is a certain kind of playfulness. Bed should be a place where you can to some extent regress and be childlike and funny and totally relaxed, and that relaxation can take any form, from making jokes to crawling around on all fours and barking like a dog. I think if adults don't have certain areas in their lives in which they can be playful, they crack after a while. And one of those areas, to me, is sex.

PLAYBOY: Have you always felt that way?

JONG: To some extent, yes, but I feel freer, better about my own sexuality at this point in my life than I ever have.

PLAYBOY: Are you saying that you felt bad about sex previously?

JONG: Oh, I think it's very clear in all my writing that for a long time I thought having pleasure was something to feel guilty about. My own adolescent sexual experience was fraught with guilt. I truly believed I was the only person in the world who ever masturbated, who ever finger fucked. I think I discovered masturbation to orgasm when I was about 13, and I was sure nobody else had ever done it.

PLAYBOY: Do you get off as well with masturbation as with intercourse? Or do you agree with another Greer dictum, that "a clitoral orgasm with a full cunt is nicer than a clitoral orgasm with an empty one"?

JONG: I much prefer an orgasm with a cock than without one. That's the best there is. But I think the distinction between vaginal and clitoral is totally mythic. Because, as far as I can see, every orgasm starts in the clitoris and ends up in the vagina, and it doesn't matter whether the orgasm is induced by somebody manipulating the clitoris with the hand or going down on you or putting his penis inside you. It was Freud who decided there were two kinds of orgasm. What did he know? He wasn't a woman. I would love to get him back here and ask him to explain it.

PLAYBOY: Demonstrate it?

JONG: God, no. Just explain. He said that a clitoral orgasm was im-

"My friends tend to be very explicit—at least with me. We talk endlessly about men in bed and their dimensions. I think if men ever heard the things we say to one another, they'd wilt."

mature and a vaginal orgasm was mature, and I think he probably meant that a woman who got satisfied by having a penis inside her was more "mature" than a woman who got satisfied by having her clitoris rubbed. What he was really saying was that whatever is good for men is "mature." I think the whole fuss is totally without foundation.

PLAYBOY: Some women swear they get their best orgasms with vibrators.

JONG: Really? Warm flesh is nicer.

PLAYBOY: Is it true, as reported in Newsweek, that some San Francisco sculptor sent you a marble penis?

JONG: It was a sculptor from Los Angeles and he sent me a marble penis to be used as a dildo.

PLAYBOY: Did you?

JONG: Marble makes a very cold dildo. But you know how it is with writers—anything for research.

PLAYBOY: How big was it?

JONG: About life-size.

PLAYBOY: Now we get into the whole thing about prick size. Does it really matter?

JONG: Well, I remember in college they used to say it's not the size but the stroke. My personal suspicion is that it's both the size and the stroke, but any answer to that question is going to make men all over America feel terrible—because every man has a subjective view of the size of his own genitals. Most men are going to tend to feel inferior, even if they are in fact well endowed.

PLAYBOY: As women are self-conscious about their breast size?

JONG: Exactly. I always thought that I had very small breasts, but I've been told by a number of men that, while they're not enormous, they're a pretty respectable size.

PLAYBOY: Did you ever want big jugs?

JONG: Who didn't? But the nice thing about mine is they stand up.

PLAYBOY: Women's libbers are sometimes described as bra burners. Do you see any connection between liberation and brassieres?

JONG: None at all. I rarely wear a bra myself. I frequently go without any underwear at all. But I can get into stuff like Frederick's of Hollywood lingerie for fun. I enjoy wearing makeup; I like sexy clothes. I don't think that's a true feminist issue at all. And no bras were ever burned by anyone, in fact. That's a media myth—one of many used to discredit feminism, or any revolutionary movement.

PLAYBOY: You have, whether you've intended to or not, been taken up as something of a guru by elements of the feminist movement. Do you see other feminist issues as bogus?

JONG: No, but I do get pissed when certain famous feminists say, "No more alimony" or "no more child support." They don't know what it's like to be 38 years old and have three kids, never to have graduated from high school or college, to have devoted your whole life to helping your husband up the corporate ladder, and then have him walk out with somebody else. I feel I'm in a privileged position in currently making a living writing, but a lot of women are not that privileged. They've spent their whole lives catering to men and children, and now they're supposed to start from scratch. It's impossible to expect that. Look—there are so many ways in which successful women are discriminated against; imagine how bad it is for the average woman.

PLAYBOY: Another burning feminist issue is abortion. What's your feeling about that?

JONG: Obviously, I think women should have the right to determine whether or not they need an abortion. I mean, that should be a basic premise. I personally have a lot of negative feelings about abortion.

PLAYBOY: You mean you couldn't have one yourself?

JONG: Psychologically it would be very tough on me, because I am 33 years old and have never had a child. I never lie about my age, by the way, with the result that frequently friends of mine who are five years older than I appear to be five years younger. But things happen to women who are past 30 and have never had a child; we get kind of crazy on the subject.

Abortions—I think there will always be abortions. The question is whether there will be legal, safe abortions or back-street abortions. That's why the Right to Lifers infuriate me so. Their attempts to stamp out abortion through legal measures mean only that rich women will have safe abortions and poor women—the Puerto Ricans, the blacks, the college students—will get them on kitchen tables. Or get blood poisoning or perforated uteruses. And I think that's just unconscionable.

PLAYBOY: Before we leave the subject of the dogma of women's lib, let's bounce this statement from an unnamed male observer off you: "A feminist who admits to liking men is comparable to a Nazi leader who says he loves Jews."

JONG: I hate it when people polarize us like that. I don't see why being a feminist should be inconsistent with loving men. I suppose the trouble is that a lot of women, in order to love a man, feel they have to submerge their own identities. So if they want to be themselves, they have to give up loving men.

"I don't know whether you have to have an orgasm every day, although it would be, certainly, very nice."

PLAYBOY: Do such women often come on to you sexually? Have you gotten letters from women propositioning you?

JONG: No, I haven't gotten many propositions from women. I do remember getting a letter from three women who said, "Dear Erica, do you want to be made happy beyond your wildest dreams? We are dykes and we can make you happy. Please call us at such-and-such telephone number."

PLAYBOY: Did you call?

JONG: No, I never did. But I don't get many overtures like that—I think probably because my work seems so heterosexual that a lesbian would assume I wasn't interested. I've been criticized for that, by the way. For example, the feminist journal Off Our Backs did a very, very vituperative review of my first book of poems, Fruits & Vegetables, and the gist of it was that the trouble with Erica Jong is that her mind's not open to bisexuality or to lesbianism. I think that's a silly criticism to make of a writer's work, to judge somebody on his or her sexual orientation.

PLAYBOY: We take it that yours is pretty exclusively heterosexual?

JONG: Well, I must say I feel there should be utter freedom for gay people, that they're unfairly persecuted. I could say to you that some of my best friends are gay, except that it would sound stupid. But I, myself, really am oriented more toward men than I am toward women.

PLAYBOY: Somehow you sound as if you're apologizing for that. Do you feel you must?

JONG: Well, in this day and age, one almost has to apologize for not being bisexual.

PLAYBOY: Do you dig photos of nude men, such as the centerfolds in PLAYGIRL?

JONG: I'm not particularly turned on by those photos, but I think that's because I look at those men and think, "God, I know how absolutely dumb he's going to be." One of the things that turn me on in men is

intelligence.
PLAYBOY: What makes you think a man's dumb just because he poses nude? Are you really a female chauvinist prig?
JONG: Oh, those men always say they're posing to further their acting career or something. Besides, they never have erections! Real men excite me more than pictures.
PLAYBOY: What turns you on about real men besides intelligence?
JONG: Touch. And a real, live nude man walking across the room toward me turns me on immensely.
PLAYBOY: Some women, to the surprise of social scientists, are now admitting that they are aroused by pornographic movies. Are you?
JONG: My reaction to porn films is as follows: After the first 10 minutes, I want to go home and screw. After the first 20 minutes, I never want to screw again as long as I live. Those endless blow jobs in slow motion, to me, are just tedious. The funniest porn film I've ever seen is one of two little girls in pigtails—they're really women of about 30, but they're dressed up as little girls in pigtails, with short skirts and knee stockings—making love to a man in an ape suit who has an enormous black-plastic penis that gets longer as they pull on it. One night I sat down with some friends in an apartment to watch some other porn films and we got so bored with running them forward that we decided to run them backward—so we could see the ejaculations returning and the cocks getting soft and the pants getting zipped.
PLAYBOY: Was that a turn-on?
JONG: No, but it was funny. None of those films was a turn-on, really. I found Behind the Green Door a turn-on for the first few minutes, but then it got repetitious.

I have been very turned on at times by erotic art, if the quality of the art is good. One thing that really turns me off is crummy prose, like you get in porn novels: "And then he pumped his hot pole into her wet pussy." It's so mechanical. Gigantic sexual organs thrusting at each other as if they didn't have people attached to them. Like those pictures in Screw.
PLAYBOY: You're not a fan of Al Goldstein's Screw?
JONG: I read your interview with Goldstein and I think he came across as a totally obnoxious human being from beginning to end. Both ends. Screw did publish a perceptive review of Fear of Flying, though. In the main, what I object to in Screw is those pictures of huge sexual organs taken out of context from the rest of the body.

You know, a friend of mine had a book of what people call wide-open beavers, crotch shots, that he got in Copenhagen. It was just page after page of cunts. A black one, a white one, a Chinese one, with garters, without garters, with crotchless panties. And they were all pretty similar. The color of the hair or the skin might be different, but they were pretty much alike. Some people apparently find this sort of thing an object of fascination. I don't.
PLAYBOY: Your heroine in Fear of Flying is certainly fascinated with the idea of looking at her own cunt.
JONG: I can't imagine anybody growing up who hasn't had the desire to see her own cunt. I certainly did; I remember in my adolescence, like Isadora, putting my head through my legs and looking at myself backward in the mirror. It was just an object of intense curiosity for me.
PLAYBOY: But not beauty?
JONG: I may be killed by the feminists for saying this, but I think many women have the basic, gut feeling that their genitals are ugly. Maybe it has to do with the fact that your cunt is hidden, that you can't see it. Maybe it has to do with the fact that it has secretions and sometimes there are odors that are not pleasant. One of the reasons I think women are very gratified by oral-genital relations is that it's a way of a man's saying to you, "I like your cunt. It's good to me. I can eat it."
PLAYBOY: Is that the idea you were expressing in Isadora's fantasy of wanting her husband to go down on her while she was having her period? Is that one of your own unfulfilled fantasies?
JONG: I don't know whether I would really want to do it, but it does seem like a tremendous pledge of love. Do you love me enough to do anything? That's really what that's about. Do you love my menstrual blood? Would you eat my shit? Stuff like that. I don't think anybody actually wants to. You just want to hear the person say, "Sure I would." Reassurance.
PLAYBOY: Isn't that some kind of power play?
JONG: No, I think it's sort of asking for acceptance. One doesn't have to go on and do it.
PLAYBOY: Wouldn't you say there is rather a lot of emphasis on menstruation in your writing—your novel and your poems?
JONG: A lot? Every 28 days. Why not? I just think that for a woman it's a very, very important thing, that rhythm of menstruation. It's a kind of connection with your own mortality. Maybe it's hard to conceive of one's own death, but I don't think it's that hard to conceive of aging, or menopause. And one thing that's absolutely finite is your childbearing capacity. So every time a woman has a period, she knows that she is 28 or 27 or whatever number of days closer to the end—menopause, aging, death. It's a kind of biological time clock, a constant reminder of mortality.
PLAYBOY: A moment ago, you referred to vaginal odors, and certainly a multimillion-dollar industry devoted to feminine-hygiene sprays and such has sprung up in recent years. Yet many women put down these products and the advertising that promotes them. Do you?
JONG: I think those advertisements are terrible. My agent called me up one day and said some company wanted me to do a commercial for cunt wipers of some sort, and I said, "Don't even tell me who they are or how much money they're offering. I don't even want to know."
PLAYBOY: Would you have been tempted by the money?
JONG: No. I was shocked that anybody would ask a writer to do something like that. Nothing would have made me do the commercial. Anyway, what's wrong with soap and water? Bring the bidet to the New World! There's another thing I've always wanted to write to The Playboy Advisor about: Okay, if you decide, as I have, that the form of contraception with the fewest side effects is the diaphragm and jelly, what do you do about oral-genital sex? The jelly anesthetizes the tongue and tastes terrible! Why don't companies come out with some kind of yummy-tasting contraceptive cream—grape flavor, maybe?
PLAYBOY: There are flavored douches and male-genital sprays on the market.
JONG: But that doesn't solve the contraceptive problem. And I really don't want to take the pill. I don't believe one should fuck up one's body with chemicals. I might take a sleeping pill occasionally, if I'm on a tour and can't relax in an unfamiliar hotel room. And I always used to carry penicillin tablets, because I have the greatest clap phobia of anybody in the world. I've always been terrified when I slept with somebody I didn't know well. I guess I'm just an alarmist, because when I travel someplace I take V-Cillin K, Lomotil and my diaphragms.
PLAYBOY: Diaphragms, plural? You have several?
JONG: A whole collection. I'm planning to send them to the Smithsonian. But—although this may go against the way people see me—I haven't really done all that much sleeping around. I was always preparing for it, just in case a really terrific guy came along—carrying around diaphragms in my briefcase and stuff like that, but the number of men I've slept with in my life is very small.
PLAYBOY: How many have there been?
JONG: Not many. I don't notch my bedpost, so I don't know, exactly. I do, however, have a good imagination, and I can describe sexuality clearly.
PLAYBOY: Who was your first lover?
JONG: My first husband. He was my college sweetheart, my best friend, my constant companion—a person I took courses with, long walks with, read books with, did everything with. If it had been 1968, we would have shacked up together for a year or two and that would have been it. But because it was 1963, we got married. And we were much too young and too broke.

PLAYBOY: How old were you?
JONG: He was 24 and I was 21. We were married a year and a half, and then he had a nervous breakdown. That is the part of Fear of Flying that comes closest to something that actually occurred in my life.
PLAYBOY: When did you meet your second husband, the psychiatrist?
JONG: I met him in the fall of 1965 and we were married the next year. Then I went with him to Heidelberg, where he had a three-year tour of duty with the Army.
PLAYBOY: Like Bennett Wing, in Fear of Flying. Those were three years that Isadora Wing obviously hated. Have you been accused of being too rough on the Germans in that book? And why did you, or at least Isadora, lump the Viennese in with the Germans?
JONG: I know that makes the Viennese very, very angry, but I see them as being alike, Teutonic. Both Germans and Austrians were extremely anti-Semitic.
PLAYBOY: Were you being fair to them to generalize to such an extent?
JONG: I certainly wouldn't do it if I were writing nonfiction. But because I was writing a novel in which I was talking about people's gut feelings, I think I had the right to do it. You see, I had never been particularly conscious of being Jewish. My family was cosmopolitan; nobody cared much about religion. I never had been to a synagogue. All my life, I have had friends who were not Jewish—lovers, husbands, even. But in some way, that German experience changed something inside me, in that I came to understand what it means to have an identity you would fight for, and I began to burrow into those feelings. I wrote a lot of poems in Germany, and many of them dealt with the idea of being a victim and with rage. And from that I moved into writing about female rage and all those unexpressed negative feelings I had about family, about men, and so on.
PLAYBOY: Didn't you have other means of venting your rage? Specifically, didn't you, like Isadora, undergo an extensive period of analysis?
JONG: I was in analysis for eight years. I didn't have as many analysts as Isadora did; I had three. I'm not really sure why I spent eight years in analysis; one reason was that I was married to an analyst and it seemed to be the thing to do. I was greatly helped in a lot of things by analysis, though. I did suffer from writer's block and I was terrified of flying. I'm not anymore. Analysis really did help me enormously. It freed me to write about things that matter deeply to me. If you can learn to be authentic and honest about your feelings on the couch, you can bring that authenticity into your writing.
PLAYBOY: One prominent New York psychiatrist made headlines recently when he was convicted of prescribing sexual relations for a patient, with himself as the sex partner. What's your opinion of that technique?
JONG: I'm totally against it. I think it's like child labor. Exploiting the helplessness of somebody who depends on you. When a person goes to a psychiatrist and puts his or her life in that person's hands and then gets a pass out of it, I think that's utterly immoral. And the psychiatrists who rationalize it as good for the patient are the lowest of the low.
PLAYBOY: What's it like being married to a psychiatrist?
JONG: It probably depends on the psychiatrist you're married to. They do tend to bring their work home with them, I think, and sometimes you feel you're being analyzed in the bedroom. And this sounds like a frightful generalization, but in the marriages of most psychiatrists I've known, there's an awful lot of daddy-baby stuff. The psychiatrist's wife plays a role: "Take care of me, Daddy." And the psychiatrist in turn plays a role: "I am the good daddy. I will protect you." For "protect," read: "control."
PLAYBOY: Is that what finally broke up your marriage?
JONG: It's very hard for me to talk about that marriage. But I'll say this: It was not the success of Fear of Flying that broke it up; my husband was immensely supportive of my writing, always. In fact, it was he who insisted that I use his name in my writing. I remember pointing out at a much earlier period of our lives, long before Fruits & Vegetables was published, that if I ever became a really well-known writer, it would ensure us much more privacy if I used my maiden name. But he was adamant about my using his name, Jong. He wanted this identification with me, as a bond between us—and he was relentless in his insistence. I think if he hadn't been so strong on it, I would have used my maiden name. Anyway, he was always proud of my work, proprietary, almost, and he never objected to the book. He read it all before publication and endorsed it heartily. Who can ever say why a marriage breaks up? We didn't share the same sense of humor—that's part of it.
PLAYBOY: How would you describe your sense of humor?
JONG: I see the world as a tremendous circus. I am very anti-elitist, anti-authoritarian. My real view of the world is a satirist's view, and more often than not, I find the games we play to gain status very foolish. And I want to share that laughter with somebody; I mean, I can't get on with people who take all that bullshit seriously.
PLAYBOY: And your husband did take it seriously?
JONG: Most people do, and I think he did more than I did.
PLAYBOY: Is he a Freudian analyst?
JONG: Ask him.
PLAYBOY: We wondered because Freudianism is an extremely authoritarian discipline. If you're such an anti-authoritarian, how could you ever get mixed up with a Freudian analyst?
JONG: Mixed up is the key phrase there. I don't believe in systems, and I don't believe in breaking the world down into two types of people or two types of orgasms or any of those things. I do not want anybody to feed me any kind of orthodoxy, whether it's Catholicism or Seventh-day Adventism or Calvinism or Freudianism or anything else. Doctrinaire Marxists bore me. Doctrinaire Gestalt therapists, doctrinaire sexologists bore me.
PLAYBOY: What's your opinion of Freudian theories about sexuality?
JONG: There are a number of things in Freud's writing that lead me to believe he was extremely frightened of sexuality, very hung up and guilt-ridden.
PLAYBOY: Specifically, how about one of Freud's most controversial theories: Do you believe in penis envy?
JONG: That has a certain lilt, like a singing commercial for peanut butter. No, I believe that women envy the power men have in our culture, and well we might: I don't think we literally envy the organ. We don't have to; there's so much else we can envy. We can envy the fact that men make more money; we can envy the fact that society is structured for their benefit; we can envy the fact that they can go out to restaurants unescorted without getting pinched in the ass.
PLAYBOY: We thought you liked getting pinched in the ass, or is that only Isadora's predilection?
JONG: Isadora likes it. Isadora—she's incorrigible. I like to be pinched on the ass, but only by some people. And I want to pick the people. Isadora has a lot of weird tastes that I don't share. Most of her fears, though, are mine. Or were. I've outgrown many of them.
PLAYBOY: What besides your fear of flying?
JONG: I'm no longer afraid of being alone. That panic that Isadora feels—"Oh, my God, he's going to leave me and I'll be alone"—that actually is the irrational female panic that is ground into us from our earliest days and reaffirmed during our adolescence. God forbid that you should be without a date on Saturday night! God forbid you should be alone on New Year's Eve! God forbid your man should leave you! And then you discover, well, being alone is pretty nice. I like my own company. If I don't have a date on Saturday night, I'm reading a terrific book. I'm going out with a woman friend or with a man who is not my lover but whose company I enjoy. It's not so terrible. Life goes on.
PLAYBOY: You're in the process of getting a divorce. Why do you think so many marriages are breaking up these days?
JONG: Women are tired of bending, so they break up. I think that in some cases, divorce comes about through a healthy desire to fulfill one's own individuality. In other cases, it may be part of an endless quest for what is unfulfillable anyway. The things that used to hold the family to

gether don't exist to the extent that they did. Childbearing is optional and even if you do have children, it doesn't take the whole of your life, because one child, or two children or even three children, is not a total lifetime's work in the way that it was when women had 14 children. I mean it doesn't go on as long.

PLAYBOY: You've been quoted as saying you have finally decided you'd like to have children.

JONG: I think I would. I certainly have waited and waited, as long as one can wait; but I don't believe I will get out of my childbearing years without having at least one child.

PLAYBOY: And it doesn't matter to you whether it is born in or out of wedlock?

JONG: Not at all. I'd rather be unwed than in a state of deadlocked wedlock. I don't think marriage guarantees a woman anything she can't have outside marriage—in terms of security, child support and the like. I only wish tax and inheritance laws did not discriminate against the unmarried. Unfortunately, they do. Other than that, I can't think of any reason one should be married. What can marriage offer me? It certainly doesn't guarantee that I won't stop loving somebody—nor does it ensure the continuance of a relationship. In some sense, it puts a sort of dutiful obligation on both parties that may make it harder to love freely. I'm not absolutely sure of this, but it's possible that if you feel locked together in a certain way, your love feels obligated rather than freely given. If you only live with somebody, it is taken for granted that you do so because you want to be with that person. Nothing in this world is more secure than that.

PLAYBOY: Do you agree with those who claim the trouble with modern marriage lies in the nuclear family? Would you rather live in a commune?

JONG: Boy, if I could find six people with whom I could live happily, I'd be glad to have a commune. But I think it's hard enough to live with one. It's practically a miracle when you live harmoniously with anybody. You know, theoretically I always said I would like to have a variety of people in my life, a variety of men. And yet I always wind up pretty consistently with one man and am monogamous for long periods of time. Ziplessness unzips me. Monogamy helps me work and function and write. I think it's just that there are so few people in this world whom one can really love, whom you feel that tenderness toward. It doesn't happen to me every day. More often than not, I've felt a sort of intellectual contempt for many men. I know that sounds terrible to say, but I can remember, from the time I was an adolescent, thinking, "Oh, gee, he's so attractive, but he's so stupid."

PLAYBOY: Are you saying you couldn't go to bed with a man you didn't respect?

JONG: Oh, I could and I have, but I've always felt sorry afterward. For me, it is so much better to have a warm, loving, companionable relationship.

PLAYBOY: What would you consider an ideal relationship?

JONG: I have a new love poem that expresses it. It's about giving. I think we've always been afraid that if we give too much it will turn the other person off. And sometimes it does. Unfortunately, there are a lot of men—some women, too—in this culture who are terribly afraid of commitment. But I would think that if you could find somebody who was not turned off by it, you could just sort of renew each other, and that would be life's greatest pleasure.

PLAYBOY: Isn't there a contradiction between what you've just said, about commitment and monogamous relationships, and what you, through Isadora, had to say about the excitement of being unfaithful? The eroticism of sloppy seconds, so to speak?

JONG: It's not fair to blame me, three years after writing a book, for my character's views. Sure, one of the fun things about adultery—at least for a little while—is the sense that you're getting the best of two men. There you are, having a little affair and then going home to your husband; fucking two men in one day. The only trouble is it's very superficial. It really turns out you're not getting the best of either man. You're just getting a little piece—that's a pun, I guess—of both. Infidelity seems like a tremendous turn-on at times, but you really don't get much out of it. It's much better to have one really rewarding relationship than to have several fragmentary ones.

PLAYBOY: Do you think total marital fidelity is possible?

JONG: I think it's unreasonable to assume that one's mate is always going to be faithful. You know that people are not going to go for 20 years without ever fucking somebody else—for whatever reason; maybe just to assert independence, to prove you aren't caged. Sometimes out of a genuine compulsion. Or overwhelming attraction. It's unreasonable to assume that there won't be such occasions. But I'm the worst person to talk about that, because I'm very jealous. I'm really fascinated with jealousy and the effect it has on a marriage. There's something of that in my new novel.

PLAYBOY: Some married couples deal with this problem by permitting a certain amount of sexual freedom. How would you feel about open infidelity? Wife swapping or consensual adultery?

JONG: I feel much less threatened by it than by secret infidelity, and I think maybe in this respect, I'm like a lot of other people. The thing that gets me the most crazy about infidelity in the way that it's practiced in a conventional marriage is the secrecy. It re-evokes all your childhood terrors about things going on between the adults behind locked doors. When you find out that somebody has been cheating on you for years and that the night he was supposedly off studying for such and such he was really … that's what makes me crazy.

PLAYBOY: You don't subscribe to the "What you don't know won't hurt you" school of thought?

JONG: No, I don't, because I've had it both ways. I would have gone along with that idea until I actually experienced it, found out that things had been going on behind my back for years. And suddenly I understood all the overheard conversations, all the little innuendoes, whose car was parked in front of whose house—all those things—and they just came down on my head with sickening force. After that, I really felt I would rather know, painful as it is. I think lying corrodes a relationship. When you start lying to each other, you start with little things, lies by omission. And the lies grow and that ruins the relationship. I would rather have things out in the open.

I don't mean that you ought to call home from a business trip and say to the man or woman you're living with, or your husband or wife, "Darling, I just slept with So-and-So." I mean, you don't do that on the telephone. You wait until you're back together and talking in a kind of loving way.

PLAYBOY: What about, "Darling, I want to sleep with So-and-So"?

JONG: I honestly think that would be less threatening than keeping it a secret. But sometimes you take the steam out of the fantasy by actually speaking about it, and then you find you don't want to do it. But you see, if we all did that, there would be less fucking of other people out of rebellion and more doing it for the pure pleasure of doing it.

PLAYBOY: Do you think a lot of fucking is done out of rebellion?

JONG: Yes, absolutely, in conventional monogamous marriages. And when you read a lot of the novels of adultery that have been written by women, you see that pattern. Very often the woman finds a lover who's not nearly as good in bed as her husband. Certainly, in Fear of Flying that's the case; the woman finds an impotent lover. He can't even get it up most of the time. So what's the need that's being fulfilled by this man? It's the need for rebellion, for saying. "Look, I'll show you." And I've talked to many, many women who have had affairs—sometimes persistent, constant affairs throughout their marriages—and they tell you overwhelmingly: "My husband is really a much better lover. He satisfies me more often; I reach orgasm more often with my husband; we're more attuned to each other." And so you ask, "Well, why the lover?" And they say, "Ah, I feel great. I feel alive. I feel reborn." What is going on that makes her feel that way? It's being appreciated again, not being taken for granted, being rediscovered as an individual, being validated in the

eyes of a new man.
PLAYBOY: Do you have a need for validation in the eyes of men?
JONG: I don't believe I do, but I think that's the way many women live. I think validation comes very much from my work. But I must say that my sense of joy and of being at one with the world comes from having love in my life. I can live without it, as I said, but I really don't want to. I'm so much more crotchety when there's no man I love in my life.
PLAYBOY: In several articles that appeared earlier in the year, you were described as being depressed. Was the lack of a man in your life the real reason for that depression?
JONG: That may have been part of it, but I think mostly it was sheer exhaustion. I was inundated with mail after Fear of Flying came out, so much that I couldn't cope with it. This is something nobody can understand without going through it. Imagine opening your apartment door and finding a stack of mail that comes up to about mid-shin: four galleys in search of quotes, six books from editors saying, "Will you please write something about this?" 20 letters—15 of them from strangers, two from good friends, two or three requests for speaking engagements. It's amazing how many causes come out of the walls the minute your name becomes known. The Zionists of Upper Beverly Hills. The Feminists of Lower Mamaroneck. College Women in Search of Equal Pay. And they're all worthy causes, but nobody could keep up with them all. That was particularly difficult for me to deal with, because I'm the girl who can't say no. At first I tried to answer all the mail myself. I would categorize it, put it in big cardboard boxes: interesting fan mail, dumb fan mail, invitations to "stop for tea if you're ever passing through Secaucus."
PLAYBOY: What were some of the interesting letters?
JONG: Well, I get certain categories of letters that interest me. There's the letter of heartfelt appreciation: "Thank you very much for writing that book. You wrote about my thoughts and feelings." This type sometimes comes from a woman and sometimes from a man; almost equally from both sexes.
PLAYBOY: Men identify with Isadora?
JONG: Absolutely. A lot of men are surprised when they find out that women have the same feelings they have. I don't know why they're surprised. When I was a kid and read Great Expectations, I identified with Pip. I identified with any number of famous characters from literature—Tom Jones, Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver, for God's sake. I never thought I couldn't identify with them because I was a girl. And yet it surprises men that they should pick up a book about a female and be able to identify with her. But men and women do face similar problems, like those Isadora faced: the difficulty of separating oneself from one's family, of achieving a sense of adulthood; the dilemma of wanting to be sexually free and yet wanting to be grounded in a safe, secure relationship. That's not a female thing alone. And men will say to me, "I feel just like Isadora. I feel I am Isadora." Or sometimes, "I'm glad that you wrote about the feelings of women so that I can see that my feelings are not so different. Perhaps the sexes are not as far apart as I thought." I find that kind of letter very touching.
PLAYBOY: Do you get letters that aren't so touching? Hate mail, for example?
JONG: Rarely. I once got a crazy letter from a man that said, "Dear Erica, I would like to tear your poems into little pieces and lick them off your body," which struck me as destructive, though I suppose he meant well. Perhaps the oddest letter I ever received was from a former nun who wanted me to meet a young man, perhaps have an affair with him. I think she was in love with him but didn't have the nerve to do anything about it herself and was sort of using me as an intermediary.

Other letters come from men who want to meet me. Sometimes they will say things like, "I have a wonderful 30-acre farm and I'm very wealthy. With a very long cock." No, they don't say that.
PLAYBOY: They don't?
JONG: They don't use the word cock, but sometimes they talk about what good lovers they are.
PLAYBOY: In your own writing, you call a cock a cock, but not all writers—or publishers—are so explicit. Some months ago, The New York Times printed an article by Henry Miller praising your work, and at the end there's an italicized footnote: "The Times requested and Mr. Miller consented to alterations of some of the language in this article." One of the words the Times seems to have found it necessary to excise was bastard. How did that strike you?
JONG: As absurd. They wouldn't use the word lay, either. Or horny, which I thought was even funnier. I think writers should have full linguistic—even cunnilinguistic—freedom. But there are some people who scan down a page of prose, and if there's one cunt on that page, that's all they see. It's almost as if the thing were surrounded by a neon halo. This astounds me, because swearing was never taboo for me. It always seemed like an interesting way to make language emphatic.
PLAYBOY: With freedom, linguistic or otherwise, goes responsibility. Or so we've all been lectured. Do you feel that writers bear special responsibilities?
JONG: My own, as I've said, is to be honest. Beyond that, I've always felt writers should strive to be part of the common run of humanity, that they cannot be elitist. That's what bothered me so when I started having to delegate things, hire a secretary, get an answering service, retain an agent. I had always answered my own phone, my own mail. And I had to sort of reshuffle my head, tell myself, "OK, it's not terrible to have an answering service, to pull the phone plug out. You're still a nice girl." Once I made those decisions—and got out of New York—I felt much better.
PLAYBOY: Why did you have to get out of New York? What's a nice girl from Manhattan doing in a place like Malibu?
JONG: Hmmm. That's another whole book. I often wake up in the morning and don't know why the hell I'm in Malibu or how I got here. I think I'm probably a diehard New Yorker and that New York is so in my blood that I can't survive for too long away from it. But it was really getting to me. I used to think that writers who said they couldn't function in New York were being phony, because I wrote four books in New York. I had never anticipated what happens when you have a best seller, that you are suddenly on tap for the entire world. So it became necessary for me to get out of New York. I don't know if Malibu will become a permanent place for me. I somehow doubt it, but who can tell? Right now, I'm feeling more like a gypsy than ever before in my life. I have never had so few possessions as I have right now. I have three cartons of books and papers and four suitcases. I bought a portable typewriter and a couple of reading lamps at Sears Roebuck. Everything else is either borrowed or rented.

Actually, this is the first time in my life I've tried to live for myself. Simply. Not to worry about things, or about what people think of me, whether I'm pleasing people or not. Being able to choose my friends from among people I really love. To be with a man I really love, somebody to whom I am extraordinarily close, with whom I can spend hours talking, giggling, laughing and kidding around, flinging jokes back and forth.
PLAYBOY: We assume you're talking about Jonathan Fast, the writer with whom you're sharing a home in Malibu.
JONG: Right. I think when I first met Jon, I had the sense that I was living with my other half, a sense I'd never had with another man, ever—that this was the other side of my personality. We are not exactly alike, but there is this tremendous kind of sharing of a way of looking at the world.

I had always assumed that men and women were sort of adversaries in a relationship, probably because of the experience I'd had before. The idea of living with someone without that sort of plea bargaining and competitive strife—I was astounded to find that that kind of a relationship could exist. I had convinced myself it was impossible and unfindable. But it's not. And that's a delight, I must say. We support each other in our work, too. Jon pushes me to work; he's much more disciplined in his writing habits than I am.

BE AUTHENTIC AND T RUE TO YOURSELF

Talisa Gardner

Model **t_gardner_29**

Photographer **Anastasia | @anastasia.reut.portrait**
MUA **Ana dykalenko | @topmuabcn**
Kenia Contreras
Keniacontreras89
Will Pérez
Elmagodeloscabellos

Congratulations on your Playboy feature! How do you feel? Well considering the fact that this is my 3rd cover I am honored to see myself get older and still explore my sexy side.

What is your best physical feature? I honestly love all of me took me a long time to get to that point but have had a lot of insecurities and never smiled so would say my smile.

What's one thing people would be surprised to learn about you? I am home body truly I love to be home but if I go out I am super shy and reserved in the begging can't trust anyone this days.

Where do you see yourself 10 years from now? I have lived my life to the fullest and have done some things people haven't done in their whole life ... but after moving to Europe my main goal is to reopen my body sculpting spa it's truly my passion to help women feel there best.

Outside of modeling, what are some of your passions or projects you're currently working on? Well besides working on me to be the best mom every day I recently bought a home so every day is a project haha.

Who inspires you the most, either in modeling or in life in general? It's honestly a tough world we live in but just women that keep pushing to be the best version of themselves.

What message do you hope to send to women who see your feature? No matter what you are going thru believe in your self don't let anyone tell you you can't do anything.

How do you define confidence and sensuality in your own terms? Confidence is tough in this day and age but honestly just keep being true to your self you are beautiful and unique in your own way.

What has been the biggest lesson you've learned since entering the modeling industry? Having a good connection with the photographer is important can't have a photographer that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Do you like taking vacations? Where is your favorite place you have been and where would you like to visit next? I have traveled the world but Spain and Bali are my favorites and would love to go to Egypt one of the few places I have left.

Besides modeling, what keeps you busy? I am extremely athletic so love hiking and the gym.

What's next for you any goals, projects, or dreams you're excited about? Just taking my business to the next level.

What advice would you give to aspiring models? Be authentic and true to yourself.

Thanks for taking the time to speak to us, do you have any last words for our readers and where can they find you? Thanks again for giving me this opportunity and thanks to my fans who always believe in me.

Escorts *Need Love* Too

The Story Behind Our Story

How do escorts find love? We spoke with a writer who spent more than a year answering that question

WRITTEN BY
HELEN SIBILA

Being single can suck, but finding someone worth dating isn't easy either. Now imagine what it's like for "providers"—sex workers who are paid for their companionship and physical intimacy—who want to find that someone special. Do you tell a potential boyfriend that you sleep with others for a living? If so, how do you tell them? And when? And how do you find them in the first place? Those added layers of difficulty are the focus of journalist Tim Struby's new Playboy feature article, "How Does an Escort Find a Boyfriend? Hint: It's Not Easy."

Struby, a New York City–based writer whose work has appeared in The New Yorker, ESPN the Magazine and New York, to name just a few, is no stranger to subcultures. His reporting and research often span multiple years—"I've done stories that take a month to a year to four years," he says—in which he immerses himself in various underground communities, including South Africa's illegal street racing scene and the East Coast's mafia-connected boxing crowd.

For this particular feature, Struby spent more than a year conducting in-depth interviews with high-end escorts about their attempts at starting and sustaining long-term romantic relationships while pursuing an often stigmatized career. We wanted to know more, so we spoke to Struby about what it was like to get to know these women, what the process taught him and whether dating can ever be a walk in the proverbial park.

PLAYBOY: I'm curious about how you came up with the concept for your article.

TIM STRUBY: About five years ago a friend of mine, photographer Lynsey Addario, reached out about a multimedia project she was working on for an organization called Project&. They wanted to honor the 40-year anniversary of Working, a book by Studs Terkel about the everyday lives of working people, by talking to people from all walks of life and putting together interviews and photos of them. I had a friend who was connected with an escort, and I thought that would be an interesting perspective to include, so I had her introduce me.

When I interviewed this woman she mentioned that she had a long-term boyfriend, and later another escort told me she was married. I had never thought that was possible or even considered that reality before. How do escorts

"Can you share your partner? Are you comfortable with that? You don't know until you actually experience it."

have a boyfriend or a husband? That comment stuck with me for a long time.

PLAYBOY: How did you go from thinking about that comment to writing a nearly 5,000-word feature?

STRUBY: When I look for stories, I look for something that confounds me or makes me curious. Two years later, I decided to call up one of those escorts and see if she would be interested in talking with me, in depth, about her love life. She said she would be on board. I ended up going on Twitter and finding other escorts in the New York area to interview. I reached out to about 40 different escorts, ranging from 23 to 47 years old, and heard back from maybe 10 of them.

I met up with them and explained that my article would focus specifically on their personal life and that the process would go on for at least a year—so that it would be nuanced and truthful, not sensationalized. It was a subject that a lot of them wanted to talk about but never had a venue to talk about it.

I ended up with three main subjects who were in different stages of dating—one had a long-term boyfriend, one was dating more casually and the other was just starting to navigate dates.

PLAYBOY: Did you get the sense that providing a new outlet outside their friends, therapists and fellow escorts was beneficial for them?

STRUBY: Without question. It was validating for them in a sense. Therapy is one thing, but to be in the public eye and to put this out there is another. It freed them in a way, I think.

For other sex workers who are basically celebrities, the job has its difficulties, but at least they can be open about who they are. The women I interviewed live this double life; they're proud of what they do, but they can't showcase what they do. I think that's really hard on them.

PLAYBOY: You ended up working on this project for a year and a half. I imagine many stories you heard didn't make it into the article. Did you talk to male providers or other types of sex workers like porn stars or cam girls?

STRUBY: I didn't cover the entire scope of sex workers, because there is just such a wide range of work to cover. It would have become a book at that point.

When this story started, I had reached out to providers from different backgrounds, including race. There were a lot of similarities in experiences for the women, but I did notice in talking to Bre, a black provider, that she had a different take as a woman of color. I wish we had more room in the piece to talk about that aspect of her experience, but we decided to focus on their experiences dating rather than their actual work.

There aren't as many male providers as there are female providers, but I talked to one very popular provider early on in the process and I quickly realized that male escorts don't face the same stigmas or stereotypes as female escorts. His interview was just so banal. When I talked to these women, I could tell they deal with a different beast when it comes to their dating life. It is quite possible that the men weren't being as forthcoming with me, but overall it just seemed like their ego was built up from their work. All the women I talked to were proud of their work, but they also dealt with insecurities and issues and they were very open about talking about them. So I decided to focus on just women escorts, because I wanted to give them the most voice and the most human story.

PLAYBOY: I was surprised at how some of the women's partners were accepting of their work at first, but their relationships didn't work out in the end.

STRUBY: I was surprised by the same thing. You think, "Oh, you don't want someone fucking your girlfriend. Fair enough." But often it was less about them having sex with other people and more about time and money. That's where it gets complicated. These women make so much money, and that can be demeaning for some men. And they sometimes have to be gone for a weekend or week at a time, and they can't communicate with their partner while they're working.

PLAYBOY: Did you have any preconceived ideas about this industry?

STRUBY: I came in with the idea that these women do it for a good time, but I honestly don't think it's all that different from being a banker or a lawyer. Their interior lives are very normal; I think a lot of readers will be surprised by that. I watched The Girlfriend Experience on Starz, and I felt disconnected from that cold aesthetic Steven Soderbergh created. It was missing all the humor that comes with this work. All the providers I've ever met and interviewed are so funny, smart and likable.

I have always had a soft spot for strippers and escorts because I find that they are usually more self-aware than most people. I like people who are comfortable with themselves regardless of how the mainstream views them. As a writer, I've talked to a lot of people, and I can honestly say I have never met more fully formed and more in-tune people than the women I talked to for this story. They came to terms with their own contradictions without hesitation. All the women I spoke to are super feminist, but they also see the contradictions in their double life. I learned an immense amount from them.

PLAYBOY: Has your own love life benefitted from this experience?

STRUBY: I don't know if I have. Do I have a new perception about sex work? Yes. This has definitely helped me understand dating more than any dating app I've ever been on. But does it help with my single dating life? Not really.

PLAYBOY: Would you date an escort?

STRUBY: I don't think I could. I just think it would be very difficult. How would you feel if you went on a date with someone, and on the second date they said they were an escort? Sometimes the providers would ask me that question, and I couldn't really say yes or no. It's one of those things you just do not know until you're there. Can you share your partner? Are you comfortable with that? You don't know until you actually experience it.

PLAYBOY: Our Playboy Plus stars, many of whom are adult actors, always tell me the funniest stories. What were some that you heard from the women you talked to?

STRUBY: One escort had an older client, around 80 years old, who didn't want to have sex. All he wanted her to do was to come to his apartment with a fake gun and pretend to shoot him. He would use fake blood and then just jerk off to it.

The beauty of what they do is that it can be as weird and funny as that, but it can also be as mundane as a nine-to-five job. Like right now for your job, you have to sit with me for an hour and listen to me ramble on. They have to do that too. One woman would drive on the Pacific Coast Highway with a client, and he would play the same music every single time. She was like, p"I'm going to kill myself."

PLAYBOY: Most of your interviews happened before the pandemic. How has it impacted the providers' work?

STRUBY: Because of coronavirus, their work has been shut down. However, a lot of them don't rely on this as their sole source of income; a lot of them are in school or are doing something else. But some are getting out of the business, and some are struggling with their identity because of it. It's hard to make that much money and be empowered and then say, "You know what, I'm walking out of here." In a way, it's almost like they are professional athletes with a shelf life. You can only play ball that well for so long.

Playboy Advisor How Do I Unlock the Pleasure of the Prostate?

Playboy's resident male sexpert, Bobby Box, is here to drop some carnal knowledge on the ever-elusive prostate orgasm.

BY **BOBBY BOX** PHOTO BY **LANA VESHTA**

Q: *I'm a 27-year-old woman in a heterosexual relationship, and I would like to bring up the topic of prostate play to my partner. He's pretty sexually open-minded, and we've talked a few times about exploring beyond penis-in-vagina penetration. What's the best way to communicate my curiosity in prostate play without scaring him or making him feel uncomfortable? —T.L.,*

You mention your man is sexually open-minded, so approach the conversation casually—don't plan a speech or anything. It's 2020, and butt stuff is finally being acknowledged in the mainstream as a legitimate source of sexual pleasure, even among heterosexual men who've been under the impression that anal play is "gay." This belief system, of course, has homophobic roots, and it isn't a cute look on anyone. The prostate is a gland, not a sexual orientation.

A survey from sex toy manufacturer LELO found that 71 percent of straight men in relationships have tried, or would like to try, prostate play, and 80 percent of women are open to sharing in that experience. Since men who incorporate prostate play into their sexual routine can experience orgasms up to 33 percent stronger, this has potential to be a total game changer and a fun way to mix up the dynamics in your sexual relationship.

Of course, consent is what's most important here, so whatever you do, do not shove a finger up his unexpecting ass. This will effectively diminish any future attempts at anal play. Instead, start by complimenting his bum. Playfully pinch or squeeze it when you're together. His reaction will help you get a better sense of his comfort level.

The next time you're chatting (in person or through text) and the conversation gets hot and heavy, throw out the idea that you'd like to try something—something you think he would really enjoy. (Knock on the back door before opening it, if you will.) Ask if he'd be open to butt play and tell him how hot you think it would be. If he knows the idea turns you on, he may be more receptive to being…receptive.

If his cues are positive, you can start by stimulating the prostate externally through the perineum—the swath of skin between the balls and the b-hole—the next time you're intimate. Next time you're giving him a blow job, gently rub the area (it will feel like a plum) in a circular motion and gauge his reaction. It's a noninvasive way to test the waters and, provided he's loving this new trick, will further open his mind and his cheeks to a well-lubed finger (trim your nails prior!) or a toy, such as a prostate massager.

If he's not receptive, don't force it on him. Sex is best when all parties are actively enthusiastic about what's taking place.

If he knows the idea turns you on, he may be more receptive to being…receptive.

Q: *I'm a freshly out-of-the-closet gay male in my early 30s, and I've never experienced an anal orgasm or prostate orgasm. I would like to experiment alone before I engage with a partner, and I wanted to know if you had any tips for the best toys or lubes to use for stimulation? What is the safest way to go solo? —S.P.,*

As somebody who came out in his late 20s, I can totally relate to your experience. Truth be told, it took me some time before I was completely comfortable with anal sex—and it took even longer until I became confident.

I think it's a great idea to experiment with anal sex toys before engaging in penetrative partnered sex. It helps you get to know your body at a rate you're comfortable with without the pressure of rushing into anything.

The anal sex toy market is expansive and can be overwhelming, but the category can effectively be summed up in four parts: butt plugs, prostate massagers, anal beads and dilation kits. All have their own merits and only through trial and error can you decide which is best for you.

Before paying for a sex toy, however, I suggest you explore your prostate with your fingers and discover which sensations feel best. Enter about three or four inches in your rectum with a lubricated finger and gently play around in the area. The prostate has a distinct texture (like a soft walnut) and you'll know when you've hit it. Many say prostate massage feels like the begin-

ning of an orgasm. If you feel a sudden urge to urinate, you may be applying too much pressure. The sensations you enjoy during this time can offer valuable intel when purchasing a sex toy. Also, it's free!

Since you say you've never experienced an anal or prostate orgasm, I recommend you start with a dilation kit. These are a series of anal sex toys—often butt plugs—of graduated sizes designed to get your bum accustomed to anal play at a comfortable pace.

When you feel like moving to the next toy in the set (which is slightly larger), insert a finger alongside your current toy first. If the finger slides in without resistance, that's your green light to upsize. If it's uncomfortable, stick with the current toy for another day or two. Your body will let you know when it's ready.

If your goal is to experience a prostate orgasm, prostate massagers have an intentional curve designed to directly stimulate the prostate. They also tend to have fun vibration settings for added stimulation. I recommend the LELO Hugo or LOKI Wave, the latter of which is the first prostate massager to offer the beloved "come hither" motion that's largely favored for prostate play.

Now let's talk lube, which is absolutely necessary when using sex toys. Water-based lubes are the most versatile of the bunch and can be used with a wide spectrum of materials. However, they don't last as long as other lubricants and you will likely have to reapply, which can be a pain in the butt (wink). If you do opt for a water-based lube, choose a thick or gel-based formula, as they tend to last longer. Try Tush Cush by Cake, which is a water-based jelly made specifically for butt-stuff beginners.

Silicone-based lubes are longer-lasting and largely favored for anal sex because of their silky texture and glide. If you choose a silicone lube (Cake's Backside Slide is my go-to) don't use it with silicone sex toys, as it can deteriorate the material.

Hybrid lubes (see: Ride Silk Hybrid) are another fine option. These are largely water-based lubricants made with a small amount of silicone so you can get the desired texture that silicone lubes offer while being able to use them with silicone sex toys.

Lastly, you can also use an oil-based lube, which is the longest lasting but also the most difficult to clean. Though you may not be using barriers with your sex toys, it's important to note that oil-based lubes are not condom compatible, nor should they be used with plastic or latex toys.

Q: *I enjoy being a recipient of prostate play in my relationship, but I have yet to orgasm from it even though I find it highly pleasurable. Is it normal to never experience a p-orgasm despite being comfortable and aroused? Is there something I could be doing differently? —G.G.,*

What may be occurring here is that you are experiencing a prostate orgasm, but not seeing any "evidence" of it in the form of ejaculate. This is fairly common. Prostate orgasms can occur in the absence of ejaculation—some refer to these as "dry orgasms." Another thing about prostate orgasms: They can happen over and over again with no grace period. Many have multiple orgasms without seeing any semen at all. Because you mention you're comfortable and find the experience highly pleasurable, this could be what's happening.

Beyond that, I want to emphasize that we should stop being so goal-oriented about sex. An orgasm does not a sexually gratifying experience make! When we approach sex with a goal in mind (e.g. orgasm) it can suck the fun out of the experience. As the saying goes, "Life is about the journey, not the destination."

If an orgasm does happen, great. If it doesn't, no biggie. Did you have fun? Did it feel good? That's all that matters. We get so caught up in these arbitrary rules that it can take us out of the experience and leave us feeling guilty. Sex is about pleasure, not

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If an orgam does happen, great. If it doesn't, no biggie. Did you have fun? Did it feel good? That's all that matters.

shame! That being said, if you think the issue could be that your prostate is not being stimulated in a way that brings you to orgasm, there are a few things you can try.

Try stimulating the prostate externally, then internally. Try both at the same time (though you will likely need a toy to do this). Some find it easier to experience a prostate orgasm while they're stroking their shaft.

Next, play around with how you're touching your prostate, applying different pressure. Try the "come hither" motion, then try some gentle taps. Try tracing around the entire gland in circles, and try a vibrator. You may find that one technique or a combination of many is what it takes to produce a prostate orgasm. You can even change your positioning: You can enter doggy style, on your back, lying on your side and so on. Lift your leg or place a pillow under your hips if it helps. There is no one universal way to have a prostate orgasm, but it can be a lot of fun finding out which techniques work best for you.

Amber Ghini

Instagram **@_amberghini__**

Photography by **Myron West**

Tell us about the moment you found out you would be featured in the magazine. What was your initial reaction? I was taking shots with friends getting ready to tear Vegas up when I got the call and let's just say, the glass wasn't the only thing that dropped. I've always admired the bold confidence Playboy stands for, so being featured felt like slipping into a legacy of empowerment and sensuality. I was speechless... for about 30 seconds, then we partied harder to celebrate.

Can you share your favorite shot or spread from the magazine and why it holds special significance for you? There's a particular shot by the pool wet hair, smoldering eyes, sunlight dancing on my skin. It captures a raw, untamed energy that feels so me. That image isn't just sexy it's powerful.

Are there any particular hobbies or interests outside of your influencer work that you're passionate about? I'm all about living life to the fullest whether that's spontaneous road trips in the Slam Van finding new people to make content with, dancing 'til sunrise, or trying something totally out of my comfort zone. I'm obsessed with adrenaline-filled adventures, and I've never turned down a chance to travel somewhere new.

Do you have a dream project or campaign you'd love to be a part of one day? Absolutely! I'd love to be part of a global campaign that helps children and families in need something where I could travel to different parts of the world, make a real impact, and bring smiles to people's faces. There's nothing more rewarding than giving back, and doing it while exploring new cultures and communities would be a total dream come true.

What's your secret to feeling sexy and confident in front of the camera? I'm naturally a confident person but something that really puts it over the top and helps when I'm in front of the camera is music. The right playlist always makes me feel confident and sexy.

If you could spend a day doing anything you wanted, what would your ideal day look like? My perfect day would be spent would be on the beach with a cocktail in my hand blasting music with my friends. That's after I was done having fun in the Slam Van of course.

Would you rather be loved, respected, or admired? Respected because when someone respects you, they value your mind, your boundaries, and your soul. Love and admiration are the sweet extras.

Are you a city traveler or a nature explorer? What's on your travel bucket list? I love the pulse of a city at night but there's nothing like the untouched beauty of a hidden beach or a midnight desert. My bucket list? The Maldives, Morocco, and a night out in Santorini.

What is the most memorable date you've ever had? It was in the Philippines! We hit up this insane club, the energy was unreal, and the DJ was fire. One drink turned into five, and the next thing I know, we're dancing on tables, living our best lives like we owned the place. It was wild, spontaneous, and one of those nights you never forget (even if I can't remember every detail).

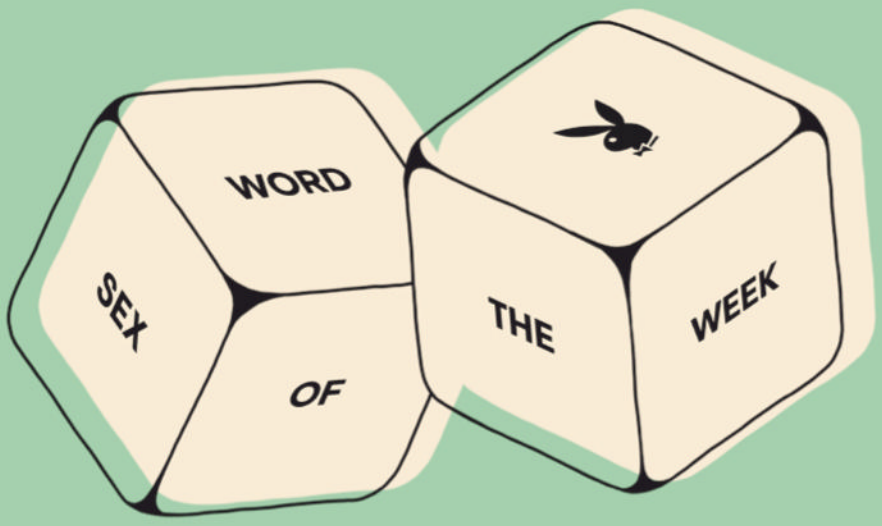
What makes you the ultimate partner to have? I am passionate, playful, and fiercely loyal. I'll hype you up like your biggest fan, challenge you like your equal, and love you like no one ever has

.

What is your favorite part of your body and why? Definitely my boobs they've got personality, and they show up before I do! I love how they make me feel feminine, confident, and just the right amount of bold. Plus, they look amazing in literally everything. My mouth will be your favorite though.

A lot of young women look up to you, what advice would you give them on pursuing their own dreams? Don't wait for permission. Be bold, be loud, and take up space. Your beauty is in your power, and your power is in your presence.

Thanks for taking the time to speak to us, do you have any last words for our readers and where can they find you? To every dreamer flipping through these pages own your magic, light your fire, and never settle. You can find me on Instagram at @amberghini but be warned and my Onlyfans amberghini.fans one click and you might not want to leave.



Unicorn

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

unicorn (*n*) a person, usually a young bisexual woman, who sexually interacts with a committed heterosexual couple

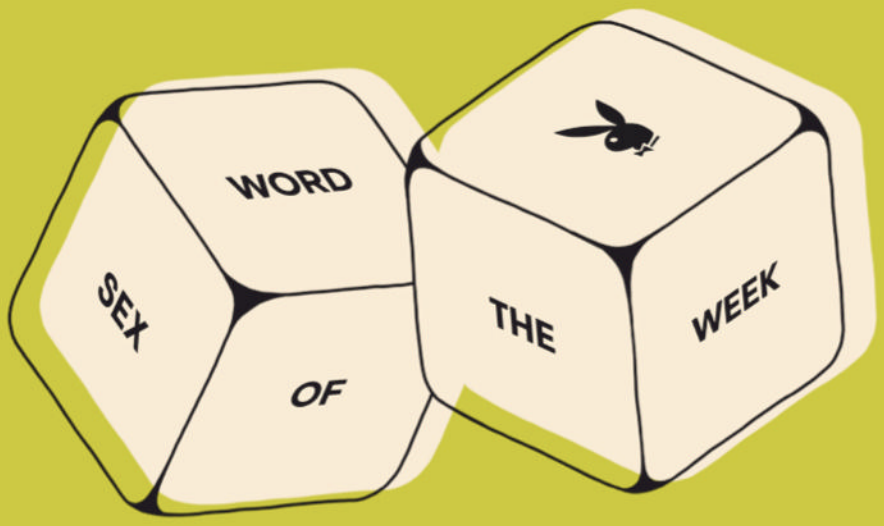
After searching for a third for almost a year, Zach and Abby finally met a perfect unicorn that they wished to welcome into their bedroom lives.

It's time for a quick lesson on the magical creatures that are unicorns. And no, we're not talking about the ones in your favorite young adult novels. In the vast world of polyamory, a unicorn is a term used to refer to p"the third" in a three-way relationship, specifically a woman who is added to the dynamic of a married couple. The woman is usually bisexual, while the couple consists of a heterosexual man and a bisexual woman. She becomes the secondary partner of both the man and woman, with the bond between the couple remaining the primary relationship.

The unicorn isn't expected to develop serious feelings or heartfelt attachments to the committed couple; her only goal is to experience pleasure. It's increasingly a way for young women to sexually explore and achieve sexual agency without the constraints of monogamy. As you might guess, the term is used to imply that such a find is rare in the dating landscape.

"Unicorn hunting" describes the search for such an individual and is a controversial term in the poly community. A common criticism of unicorn-hunting couples is that they often end up treating the woman as a toy in their relationship, an object to act out explicit fantasies upon and then discard when it becomes inconvenient. It can also be seen as straight male wish-fulfillment, in which the male partner is the driving force behind finding a unicorn and the main beneficiary.

However you choose to see unicorns or the couples who seek them out, compassion and respect from all parties inform a major part of successful unicorn scenarios. Unicorns have their own feelings, personal lives and schedules, and couples looking to explore a third would do well to remember this.



WAP

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

WAP (*n*) wet-ass pussy, a vagina that is of great renown and status

Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion's latest joint, m"WAP," went viral over the weekend, debuting at number one on both Spotify and iTunes.

This week's word is a doozy, so hopefully you brought a bucket and a mop. If you spent even a nanosecond of your life online this past weekend, you likely witnessed the song p"WAP" become the women's empowerment anthem we didn't realize we needed. If you successfully avoid the internet at all costs, good for you! But to catch you up, WAP now stands for "wet-ass pussy." (Sorry, Wireless Access Point and Weatherization Assistance Program, your time in the sun has come to an end.) "WAP" is the latest single from rap goddesses Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion, and upon its release on Friday it topped charts, with the accompanying music video racking up 72 million views.

To have a WAP is to have a punani of prestige, one that doesn't tolerate fuckboys or ignored texts or p"faking it" to preserve delicate egos. A WAP's sole mission is pleasure, and it seeks it out on its own terms unapologetically. Women, particularly black women, shouldn't have to sanitize their sexualities to make them more palatable or respectable. This song is a lyrical defense of a woman's right to be nasty. Cardi B said as much in a recent interview: "The song is really nasty. The song always been nasty. It was really hard for me to clean this song up." There you go, folks.

And WAP above all else, stands for an idea—the idea of women being confident in their bodies and wielding their sexual power. To interpret it metaphorically, possessing a WAP is to have full sexual agency at all times. So if you happen to have the opposite of a WAP—a DAP, if you will (which is a normal, common thing; every vagina is different and there's nothing wrong with needing extra help when it comes to lubrication!)—this mantra is still for you, and you have every right to belt it out to the chagrin of any old conservative who might be in earshot.

Organization Spotlight *Community Justice Exchange*

What does a world without prisons and police look like? This organization has a vision for a community-led society that can do better

INTRODUCTION BY **TORI LYNN ADAMS**

With viewership of 13th, Ava DuVernay's 2016 documentary about the insidious rise in mass incarceration, surging by 4,665 percent in the weeks after George Floyd's death, it's clear that the Black Lives Matter protests are impacting the way the masses view our criminal justice system. But four years after the film's release, we still see rampant incarceration and injustice across the country. So the question is, What do we do to combat it? Community Justice Exchange is one of the crucial organizations working to put an end to criminalization in all its forms.

In 2016, the organization's founder and director, Pilar Weiss, launched the National Bail Fund Network, a directory of bail funds accessible to people affected by incarceration. Realizing that its initial focus solely on the bail system was too narrow, she founded Community Justice Exchange two years later to create a nationwide framework to organize and address the multifaceted issue of criminal justice reform.

"We started Community Justice Exchange in order to support grassroots groups that were working on combating detention in all its forms, including probation, parole, court fees and fines, pretrial detention, immigration detention, supervision, surveillance and, of course, bail," Weiss tells me. With 10 core team members across the country and organizations in 35 states, the group has effectively spread its resources to the individuals and organizations that need them most.

"Since March, the funds that are part of the National Bail Fund Network have paid bail and bond to free over 5,000 people."

What follows is an edited conversation between Weiss and I about the organization's challenges, triumphs and vision for a more just society.

PLAYBOY: Can you break down why mass incarceration is unjust and why there's a need to combat it?

PILAR WEISS: So many people across the country are impacted by mass incarceration—nearly half of the people in the United States have a close relative who has been incarcerated. It has profound effects on people's livelihoods and their family units. My family and my community have personally been affected by incarceration and criminalization, so it has always been top of mind for me.

PLAYBOY: In a perfect world, what would our justice system look like?

WEISS: It's an exciting time right now because folks who were not familiar with the long tradition of analysis around what it would look like to abolish the prison system are starting to become acquainted with it. We have to dismantle

this humongous system that, in many places, soaks up a significant part of city budgets so it's not going to happen overnight.

Ultimately, we should figure out new ways to address harm. We're not saying that harm is going to stop; we're saying that jails and prisons are not a way to solve it. We need to completely revise how we deal with community safety. The vision is that there are no prisons or police, and instead we reinvest in community services and resources.

PLAYBOY: What are some of the more pressing obstacles your organization faces?

WEISS: The systems we're working to dismantle are incredibly powerful, well-funded and secretive. For example, the administration keeps changing laws to make seeking asylum practically impossible and to encourage the police, Department of Homeland Security and ICE to make arrests and put people in immigration detention centers. We're working against a system that's incredibly powerful and incredibly committed to oppressing people.

PLAYBOY: What is your focus as an organization right now?

WEISS: We're working on a lot of issues related to Covid. Jails and detention centers have become hotspots for Covid, so we have been pushing for the release of people and the end of jailing people pretrial. We have had some success with that—since March, the funds that are part of the National Bail Fund Network have paid bail and bond to free over 5,000 people—but oftentimes people are released under supervision. We continue to push back on that and advocate for people truly being free. Also, a lot of courts are postponing and rescheduling their court dates because of Covid. In the past, people would be penalized or rearrested for missing their court date, so we're trying to point out that double standard and make long-term changes to penalization.

PLAYBOY: How has the legalization of cannabis in various states affected your work?

WEISS: Legalizing the use or sale of cannabis might reduce the number of people being arrested for those reasons, but that's just the first layer. The system has not dealt with the fact that there are many people in jails and prisons because of three-strikes laws or the fact that someone's past record might be affecting their life right now. There's been some work around expungement and the review of cases, but it's happening slowly.

We haven't seen a mass decrease in the jail population though, which tells us that cops who used to arrest people for marijuana possession could now be arresting people for something else. People are still being racially profiled. Traffic stops and deportation are still huge problems that affect Black and Latinx communities.

PLAYBOY: What has been a rewarding experience that has stood out during your time with CJE?

WEISS: We've often had multiple organizations come together across different states to make sure that somebody's bond is paid and that there's a plan to get them back to their family. Seeing that level of collaboration between groups that are standing up for a stranger has restored my faith in humanity. That was part of the reason we named the organization Community Justice Exchange. Oftentimes the court proceedings are "the people vs. so and so." So as a community we have to come back and say, "No, you're not going to do that in our name."

PLAYBOY: What are some actionable ways people can support your organization and your work?

WEISS: Donate. Get in touch with local organizations and volunteer. There are so many different ways to support the work; sometimes it's monetary, sometimes it's with people power and sometimes it's with folks having tough conversations with their loved ones and educating them about what is happening in the world.

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